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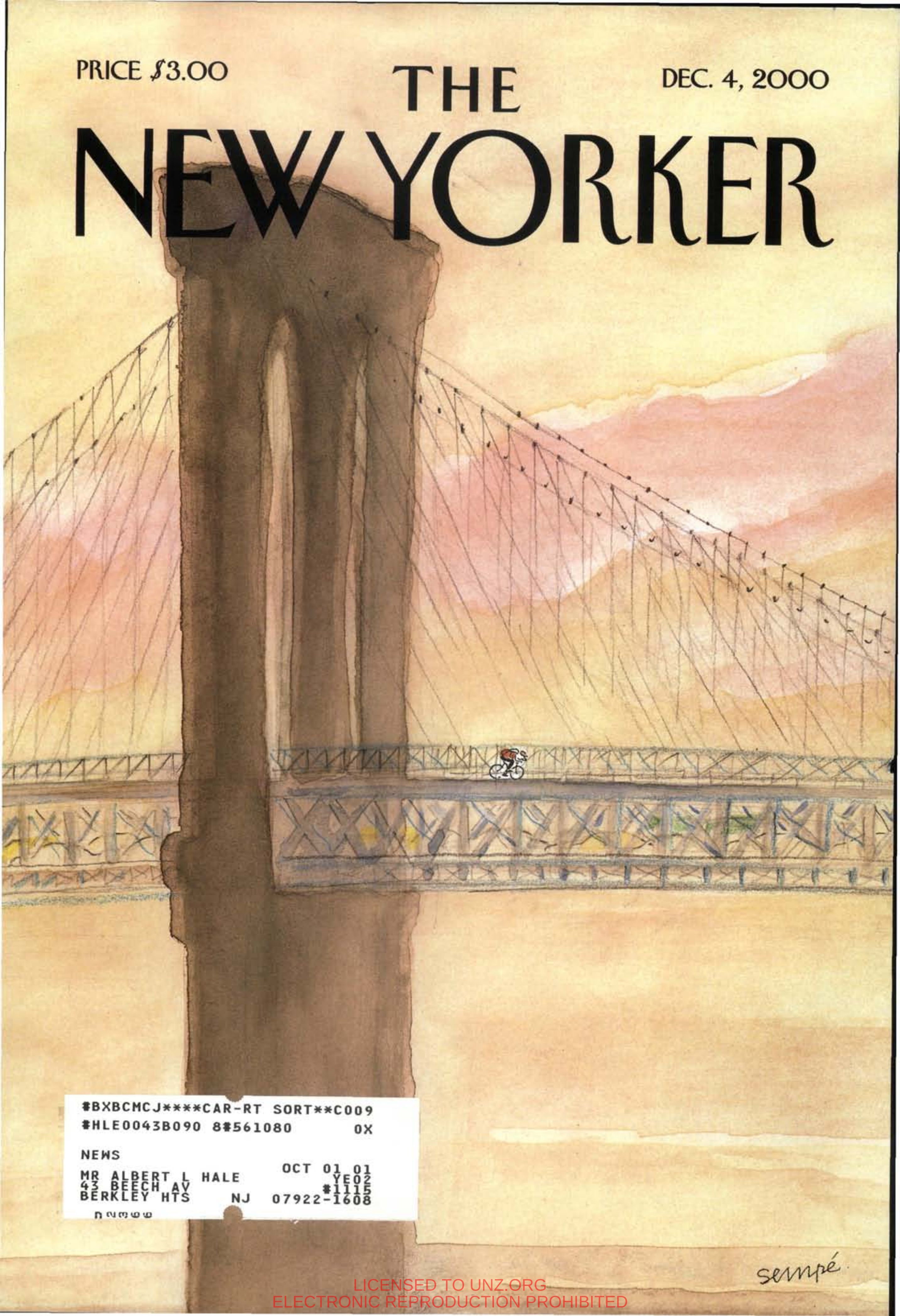

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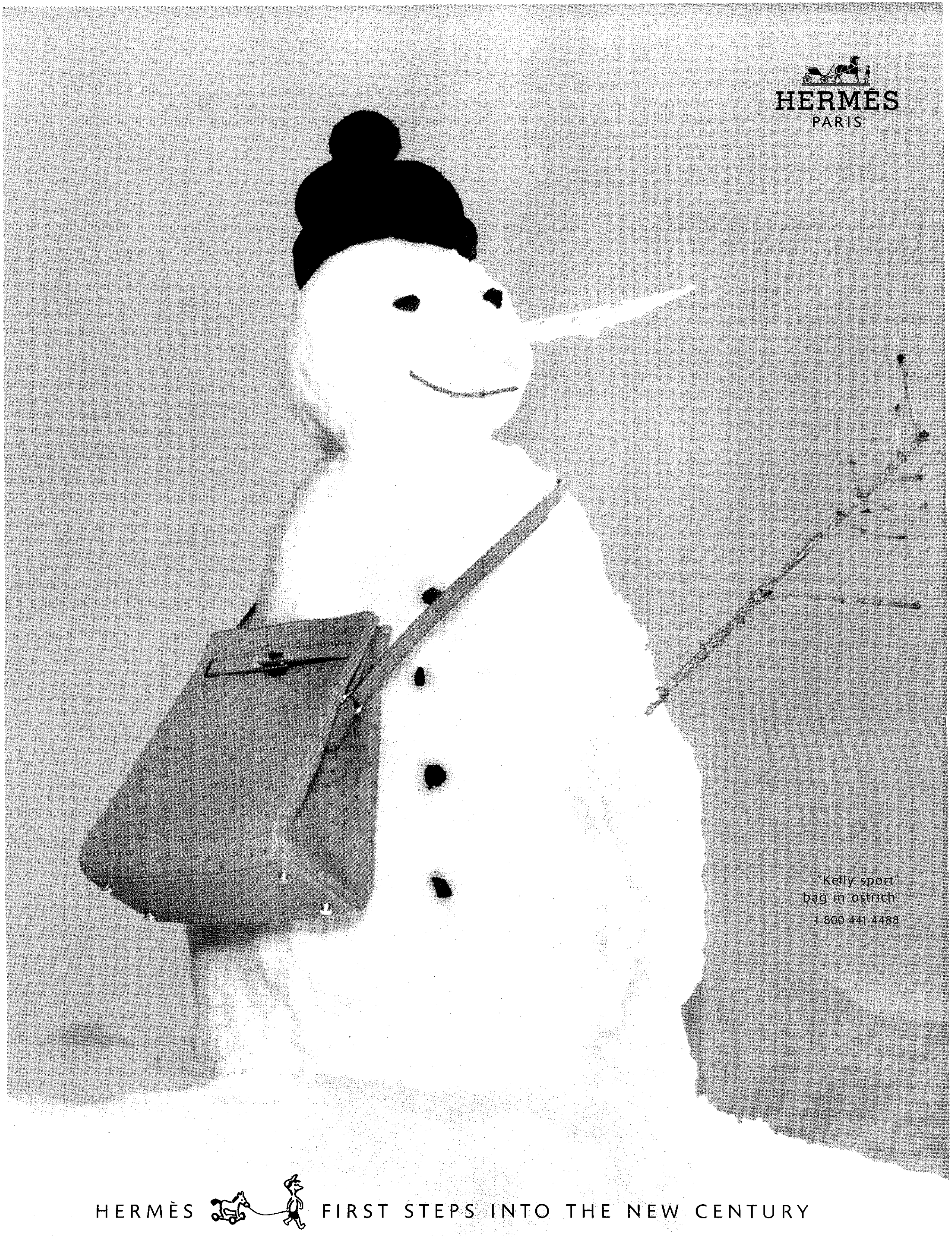
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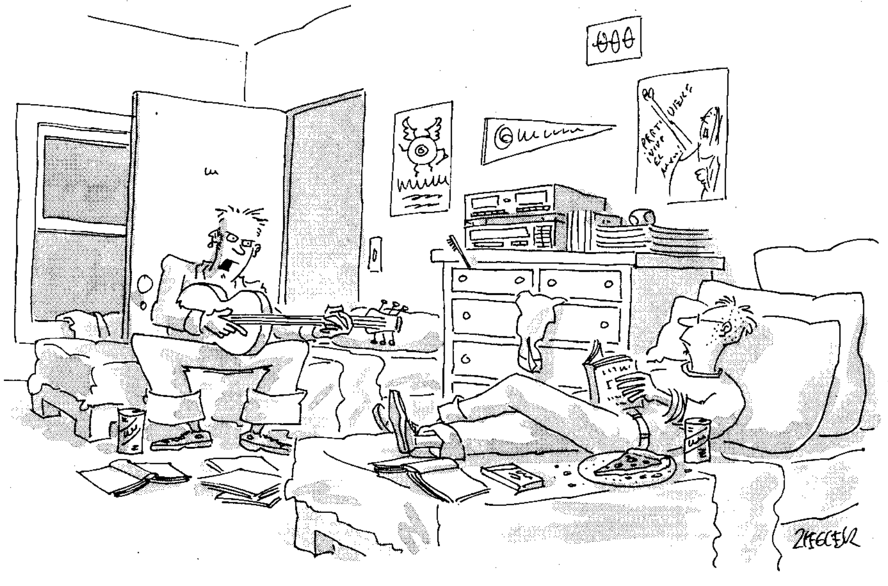

"It's going to be my first protest song, as soon as I can figure out some words that rhyme with 'Napster,' 'Bertelsmann,' and 'service charge.' "

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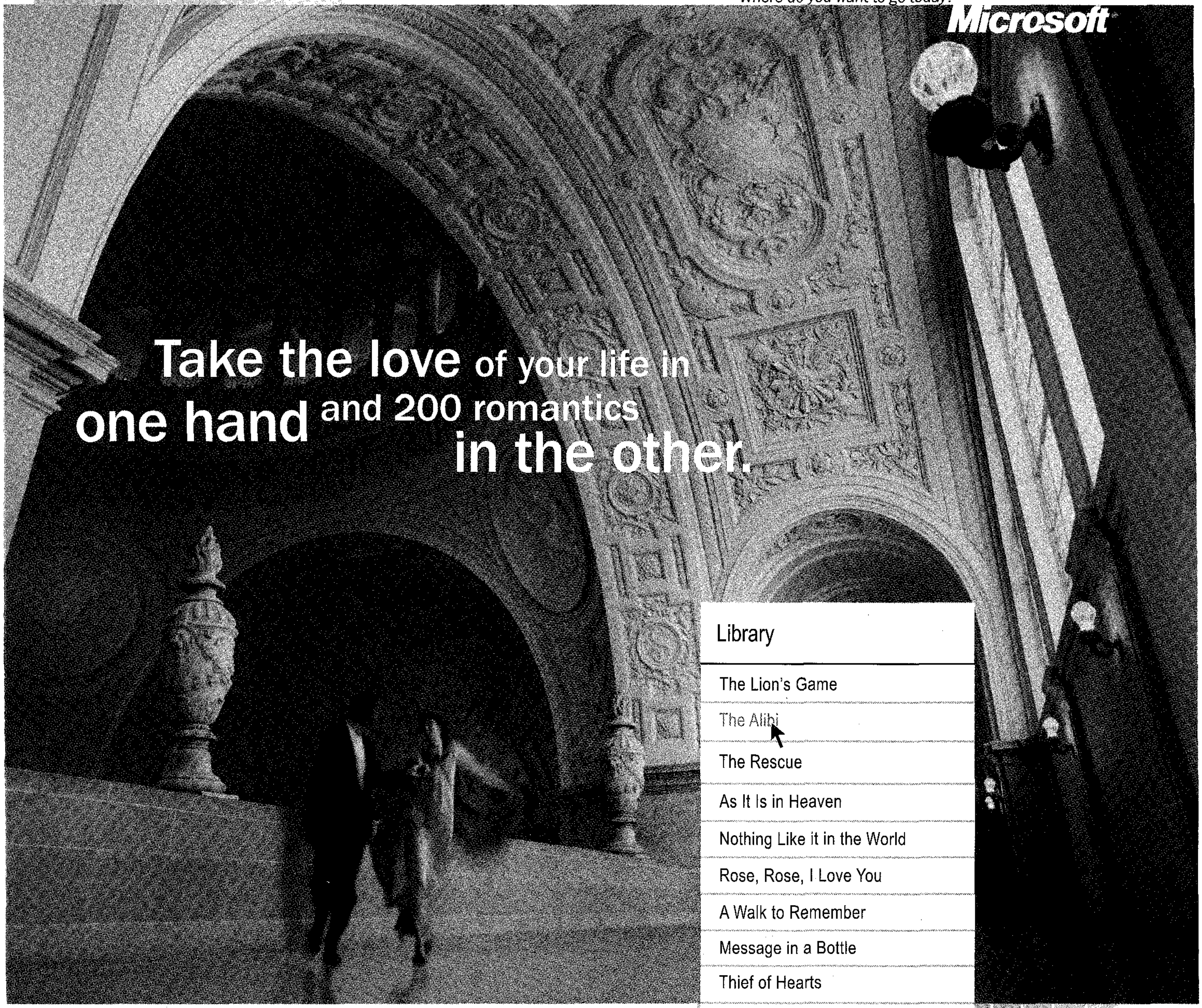
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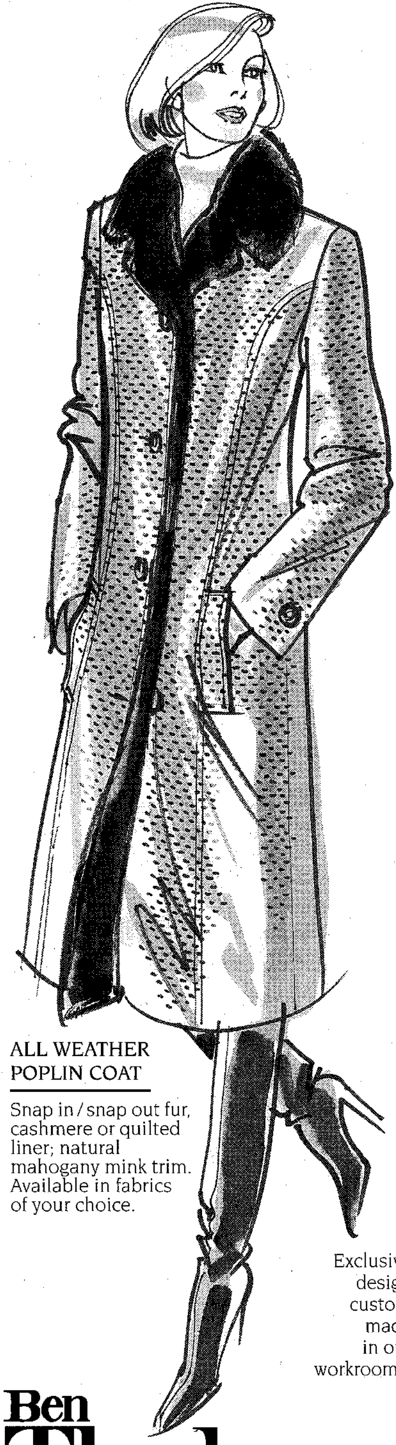

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THE MAIL

DOES MIND MATTER?

In leaning on psychological explanations, Jerome Groopman, in his article on fibromyalgia ("Hurting All Over," November 13th), gives short shrift to research suggesting that the experience of pain may be mediated by neurohormonal brain-body feedback. For example, the hormone estrogen may affect a woman's susceptibility to pain and may account in part for the dramatically high percentage of women among fibromyalgia sufferers. That women may be more sensitive to a wider range of stressors than men, that their bodies may protest more loudly and sooner, might be a liability or an advantage. But it doesn't make fibromyalgia a psychological illness.
Judith Salzman
Watertown, Mass.

In my experience as a neurologist, there is invariably some associated psychological problem in fibromyalgia patients. Whether the horse or the cart comes first, as Groopman notes, is not always clear, but handing patients a clinical term tells them that their problem is well understood and thus treatable. Being too liberal with diagnoses that are likely wrong makes a mockery of medicine, and drags it even farther away from true science.
Elijah Stommel, M.D.
Hanover, N.H.

Groopman betrays a common prejudice: the belief that our inability to find a physical cause for a disease should be equated with the absence of a cause. But, as much as doctors might prefer to stick to diseases they know how to fix, when a patient is so disabled as to need support it is they who must certify the disability. By taking fibromyalgia seriously they can do a great deal of good; by refusing to, they can do a great deal of harm.
Kenneth Miller
San Francisco, Calif.

More attention should be paid to secondary advantages that accrue to fibromyalgia patients. It's not that sufferers are malingerers, but for some, if not many, their symptoms are prolonged and intensified by benefits such as financial inducements (disability checks, lawsuit proceeds) and by their having a more or less socially acceptable reason for abandoning the difficult pursuit of a productive life. Doctors should help them to find the strength to relinquish their pain.
Herbert Bengelsdorf, M.D.
Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y.

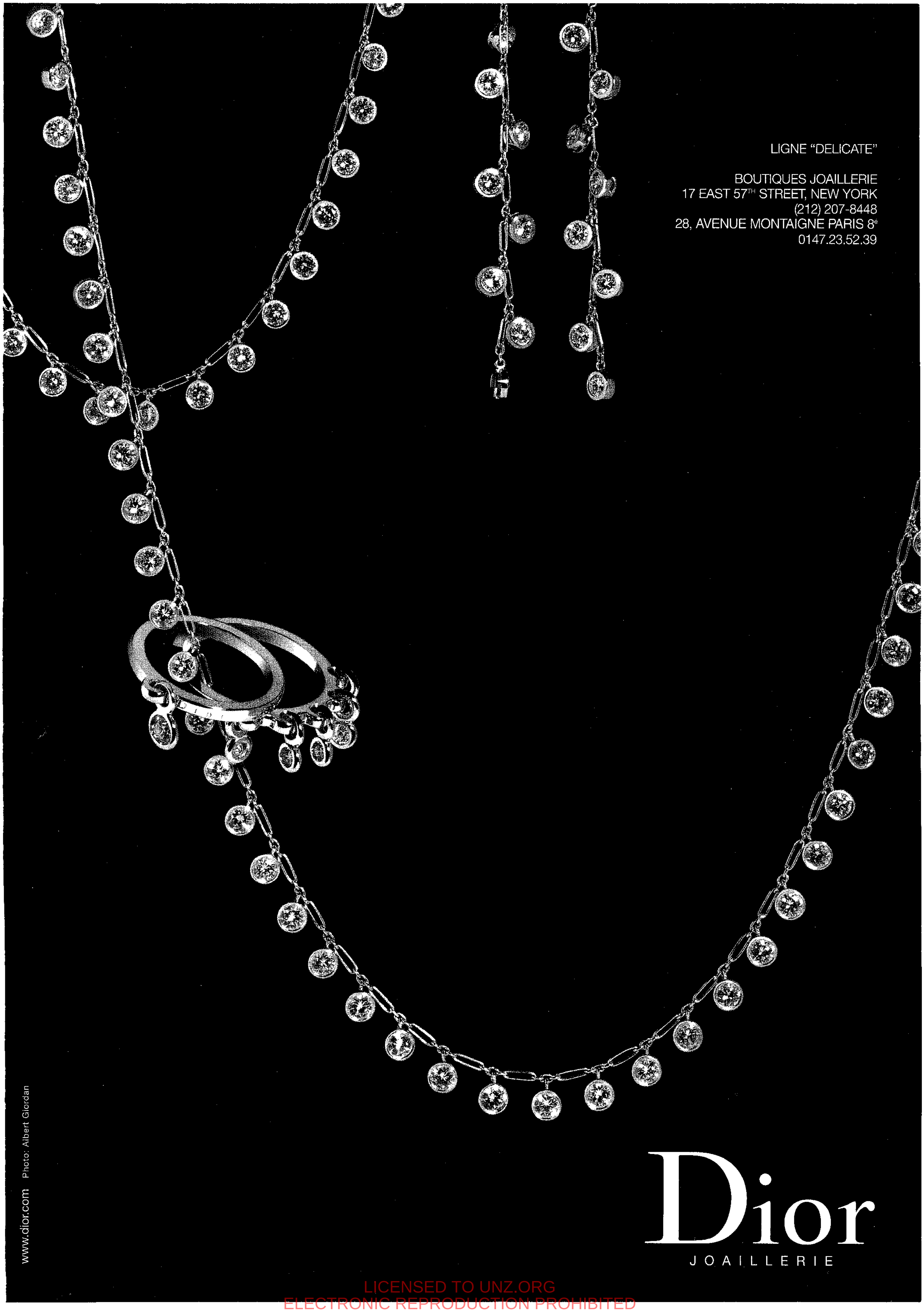
ELECTORAL GAMES

Much as I like pure democracy, and much as I like Hendrik Hertzberg's proposal (The Talk of the Town, November 13th) to reform the Electoral College by adopting an instant-runoff voting system—whereby voters would rank their preferences, with alternative choices counted in if no one wins outright—other options have a better chance. Here's one: award fifty "bonus" electors to the candidate receiving the plurality in the popular vote. This would virtually assure this candidate's election—and the two parties could continue to play their little games every four years.
C. Thomas Corwin
Princeton, N.J.

The instant-runoff voting system Hertzberg endorses has a pitfall: lesser candidates can gang up on a more popular one, trade second-place votes, and defeat what would, in a head-to-head contest, have been the majority. Imagine a close race in which Gore is ahead of Bush. Nader tells Bush that he will urge his supporters to make Bush their second choice if he promises to name him Secretary of the Interior. Bush agrees and wins, even though Gore has a plurality. But, of course, nothing like that would ever happen, would it?
Herb Peyser
New York City

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, New York, N.Y. 10036. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047 or sent via E-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.



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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

LAURENT CILLUFFO

THE HOLIDAYS

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"THE RADIO CITY CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR"
Long legs, live animals, and Santa, set to music. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Through Jan. 7.)

"A CHRISTMAS CAROL"
Frank Langella takes the role of Scrooge in this year's musical version of Charles Dickens's tale. (Theatre at Madison Square Garden. 307-4111. Through Dec. 31.) ♦ Gregg Whiteside, of the classical-music station WQXR, reads from Dickens's original manuscript, at the Morgan Library, where it is on display through Jan. 7. (29 E. 36th St. For tickets, call 590-0333. Dec. 10 at 2.)

WINTER SOLSTICE
The Brazilian singer Luciana Souza, the percussionist Arto Tuncboyaciyan, and other musicians help Paul Winter mark the changing of the seasons. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133. Dec. 14-15 at 7:30 and Dec. 16 at 2 and 7:30.)

MUMMENSCHANZ
The Swiss theatre troupe famous for its inventive use of masks and body sculpture returns to town for the holidays. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. Dec. 21 at 7, Dec. 23 and Dec. 27-30 at 2 and 8, Dec. 24 at 2, Dec. 26 at 8, and Dec. 31 at 3.)

THE TWELVE DAYS OF COCHINA
Marga Gomez, a.k.a. the "dyke of darkness," brings holiday filth to Dixon Place, in her latest one-woman show. (309 E. 26th St. 532-1546. Dec. 14-17 at 8.)

NUTCRACKERS
The New York City Ballet offers eight performances a week of Balanchine's epic, through the end of the month—or millennium, if you're still arguing (for more information, see Dance). ♦ Two more plummy versions are also available. "The Yorkville Nutcracker," choreographed by Francis Patrelle, transposes the action to New York. (Kaye Playhouse, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Dec. 8 at 7, Dec. 9 at 1 and 7, and Dec. 10 at 1 and 6.) ♦ An hour-long child-friendly version by the New York Theatre Ballet goes on pointe at Florence Gould Hall. (55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Dec. 15, Dec. 22, and Dec. 29 at 1, 3:30, and 6, and Dec. 16-17, Dec. 23-24, and Dec. 30-31 at 11 A.M., 1, and 3:30.)

TREES
Some thirty thousand lights on five miles of wire brighten the eighty-foot Norway spruce at Rockefeller Center. The singers Marc Anthony and Natalie Cole and the vocal groups 98 Degrees and Destiny's Child will be on hand for the lighting ceremony on Nov. 29 at 7. (Fifth Ave. at 50th St.) ♦ The Latin great José Feliciano and the *salsero* Johnny Pacheco heat up the holiday season at the lighting of Lincoln Center's forty-foot Colorado spruce. Also on hand are Big Bird and other "Sesame Street" residents. (Broadway at 63rd St. For more information, call 875-5108. Dec. 4 at 6:15.) ♦ Eighteenth-century Neapolitan angels and crèche figures grace the boughs and ring the trunk of the Metropolitan Museum's twenty-foot artificial blue spruce. Starting Dec. 1, there is a lighting ceremony every Friday and Saturday at 7. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. Through Jan. 7.)

HANUKKAH
Starting on Dec. 21, at 5:30, the first flame will grace the thirty-two-foot menorah at Fifth Avenue and Fifty-Ninth St. New lights will be added over the next seven evenings, and there'll be music, dancing, and hot potato pancakes on Dec. 23 at 8. For more information, call 736-8400.

HOLIDAY TUNES
The zestful Rosemary Clooney ushers in the holiday season with songs from her 1954 movie "White Christmas." (Feinstein's at the Regency, 540 Park Ave., at 61st St. 339-4095. Nov. 27-Dec. 3.) ♦ Darlene Love, whose voice was one of the birth cries of rock and roll (her Phil Spector-produced hits include "He's a Rebel" and "He's Sure the Boy I Love") and who's backed everyone from Sam Cooke and Elvis Presley to Cher, spreads a little seasonal cheer with a holiday show. (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 539-8777. Dec. 1 at 9 and Dec. 2-3 at 7 and 9. Through Dec. 22.) ♦ The former Bongos front man Richard Barone leads an abridged version of Handel's "Messiah," with solos by Jane Siberry, Gary Lucas, and many others. The "Idiot's Delight" disk jockey Vin Scelsa provides the narration. (Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. 228-6300. Dec. 15 at 8.)

MORE HOLIDAY MUSIC

"MESSIAH"
St. Thomas Episcopal Church, with its celebrated choir of men and boys, gives one of the best presentations of Handel's oratorio in the city, with the early-music group Concert Royal and soloists. (Dec. 19 and Dec. 21 at 7:30.) Those wishing a quieter, more meditative experience should consider returning for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, a service of short Bible readings alternating with music in the best Anglican tradition. (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 664-9360. Dec. 24 at 4.) ♦ Another topnotch "Messiah" will be delivered by Musica Sacra, with director Richard Westenburg and a fine quartet of soloists (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Dec. 20 at 8.) ♦ The thirty-third annual "Messiah Sing-In" (directed by some of the best choral conductors in the city) lets the audience, up to three thousand strong, become the chorus; bring a score, or buy one at the door. (Avery Fisher Hall. 333-5333. Dec. 20 at 8.)

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
The Met hosts a number of holiday concerts, all but one taking place before the museum's great Christmas tree in the Medieval Sculpture Hall. The American Classical Orchestra presents (in the Charles Engelhard Court) "Music in the Empire City," traditional music and carols from the mid-nineteenth century, by Mendelssohn and others. (Dec. 10.) ♦ Anonymous 4, the female vocal quartet, sings a program of medieval English carols and motets. (Dec. 13.) ♦ The Ensemble for Early Music presents pieces by Hildegard von Bingen and other medieval composers. (Dec. 20.) ♦ The Aulos Ensemble (with baritone Sanford Sylvan) presents Moravian seasonal music, along with arias from Bach's "Christmas Oratorio." (Dec. 21.) (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. All concerts will be given at 6:30 and 8:30.)

COOPER UNION
The college offers one of this year's more unusual events, a mini-festival of the music of the devoutly Catholic French composer Olivier Messiaen, headed by the pianists Marilyn Nonken and Phillip Bush (Dec. 14-16 at 7:30), followed by "Creator of the Stars," medieval and Renaissance Christmas music presented by the noted Pomerium Ensemble. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. 279-4200. Dec. 21 at 7:30.)

NEW YORK STRING ORCHESTRA
The annual convocation of young virtuosos, conducted by Jaime Laredo, plays Mozart and Bach on Christmas Eve at 7, followed by a concert of Bizet, Bruch, Mendelssohn, Ravel, and Richard Danielpour. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Dec. 28 at 8.)

ALL IN THE FAMILY
The Vienna Choir Boys, going strong since 1498, return to Carnegie Hall, singing folk songs, carols, and classical works by Brahms, Purcell, and others. (Dec. 17 at 7:30.) ♦ The all-volunteer Central City Chorus gives its twentieth-anniversary Christmas concert, singing Bach, Saint-Saëns, and new carols by Daron Hagen, followed by an outdoor sing-along to celebrate the lighting of the trees along Park Avenue. (Central Presbyterian Church, Park Ave. at 64th St. 838-1505. Dec. 3 at 4.)

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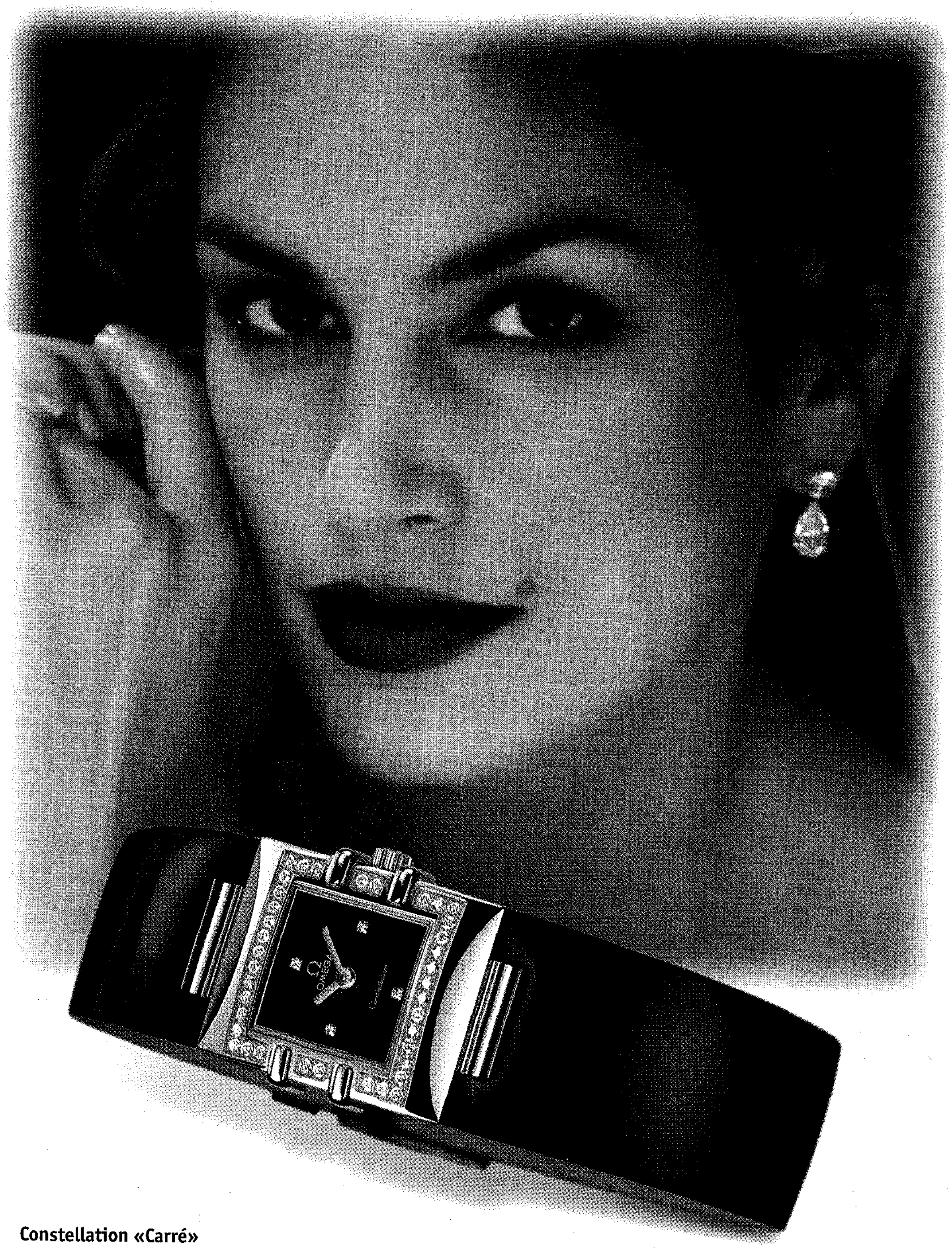

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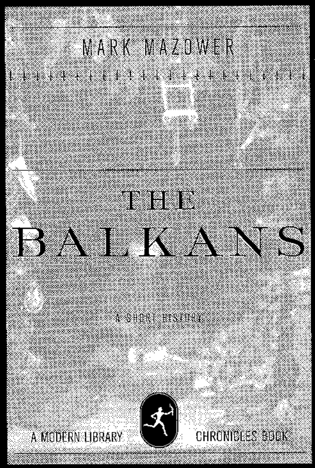

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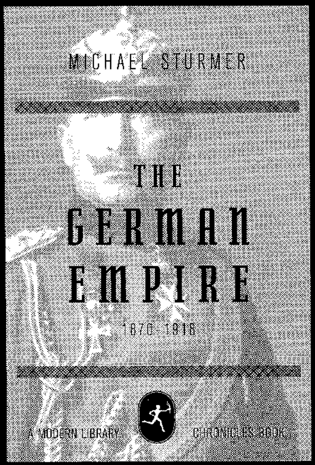

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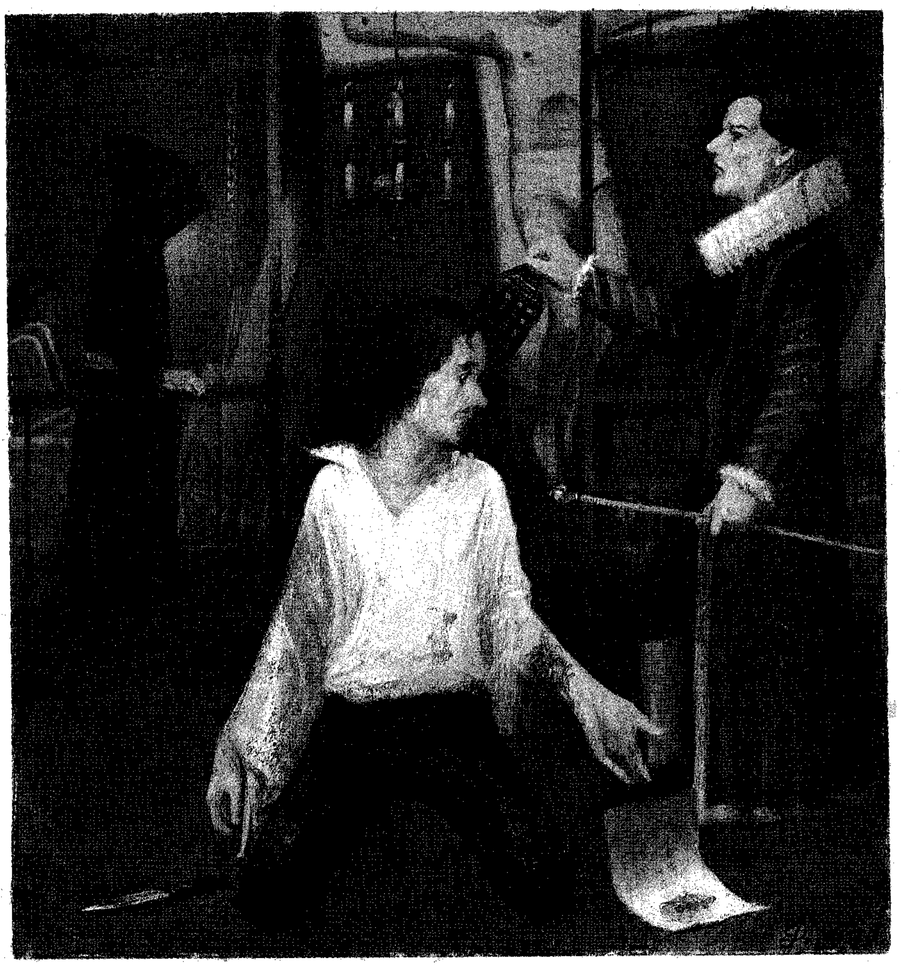
A DREAM PLAY
Robert Wilson puts his spin on the Strindberg drama, in a production by Stockholm's Stadsteater. Nov. 28-Dec. 2 at 7:30 and Dec. 3 at 3. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100.)

Foote's new play. In previews through Dec. 2. Opens Dec. 3 at 7. (Signature Theatre Company, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

OLD MONEY
A new play by Wendy Wasserstein, under the direction of Mark Brokaw. John Cullum, Mary Beth Hurt, and Dan Butler are in the cast. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

100 STORIES
The Japanese actress Kayoko Shiraishi, in a solo performance of Japanese ghost stories. Three performances only: Nov. 30-Dec. 2 at 8. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 752-3015.)



Christian Camargo, in David Grimm's "Kit Marlowe," at the Public.

GERARD DUBOIS

FERMAT'S LAST TANGO
Pythagoras, Newton, Euclid, and Gauss are characters in a mathematical musical by Joanne Sydney Lessner and Joshua Rosenblum, staged by the York Theatre Company. In previews. (Theatre at St. Peter's, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 239-6200.)

THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA
The National Asian American Theatre Company offers Chay Yew's adaptation of the all-female Lorca drama. Previews begin Dec. 1. (INTAR, 508 W. 53rd St. 718-623-1672.)

JANE EYRE
The musical. Marla Schaffel is Jane; James Barbour is Rochester. With a book by John Caird and a score by Paul Gordon. Directed by Mr. Caird and Scott Schwartz. In previews through Dec. 2. Opens Dec. 3 at 3. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

JULIUS CAESAR
The British-American Aquila Theatre Company's modern-dress staging of Shakespeare's play. Opens Nov. 29 at 8. (Clark Studio Theatre, 70 Lincoln Center Plaza. 279-4200.)

THE LAST OF THE THORNTONS
The last living member of a powerful Texas clan looks back on her family's legacy, in Horton

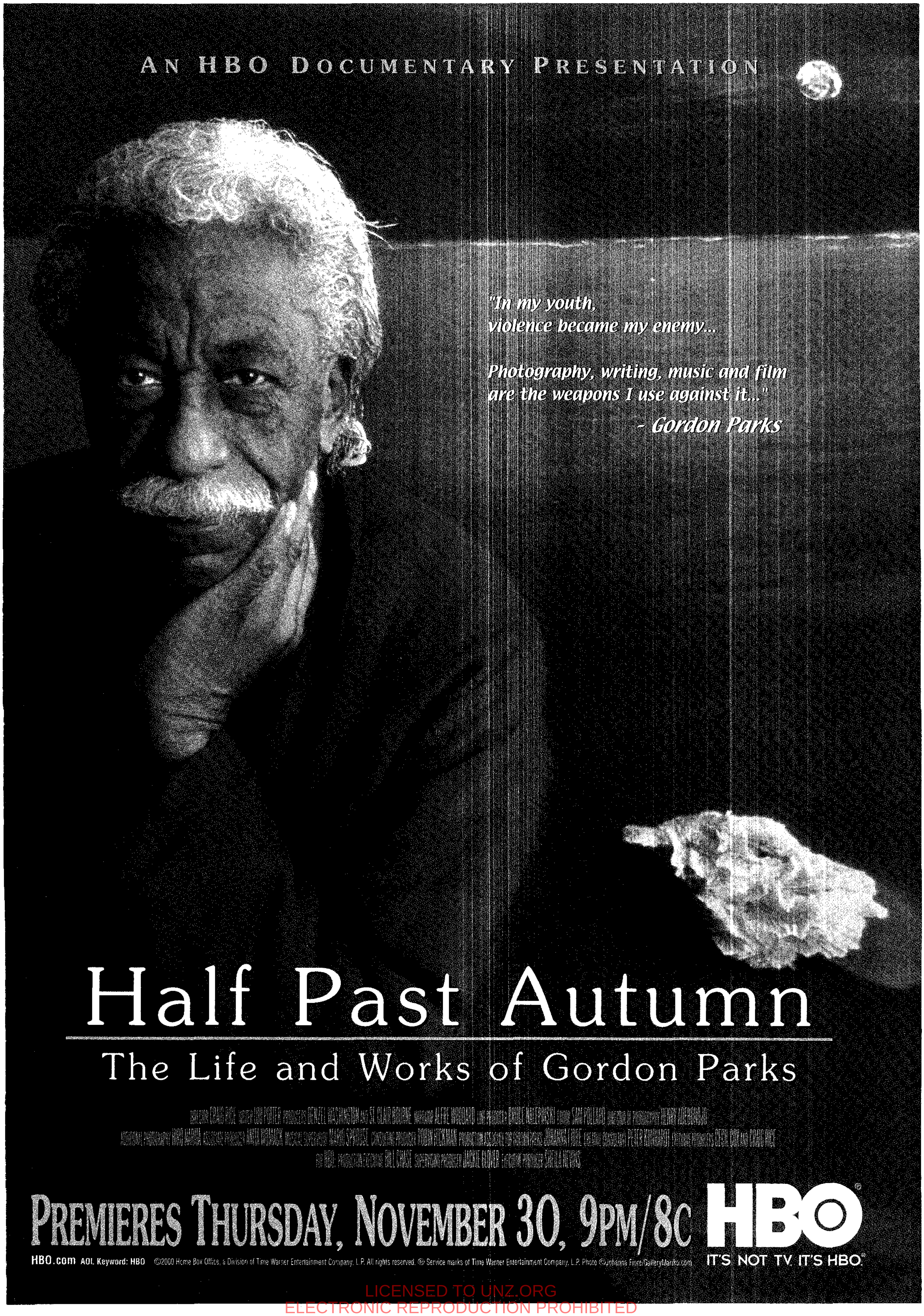
PRINCESS TURANDOT
Darko Tresnjak's new play was inspired by Cozzi's 1792 fable, the operas of Puccini and Busoni, "The Arabian Nights," and the films of Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. In previews. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 206-1515.)

SEUSSICAL
A new musical by the team of Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty which blends stories and characters from the books of Dr. Seuss. Frank Galati is the director. Two previews on Nov. 29. Opens Nov. 30 at 6:30. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

TINY ALICE
Laila Robins and Richard Thomas star in a Second Stage revival of Edward Albee's 1965 drama. In previews through Dec. 3. Opens Dec. 5 at 6:30. (307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ALICE IN BED
Susan Sontag's 1993 fantasy play, which was inspired by the journals of Henry and William James's sister, Alice. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes Dec. 9.)



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BAAL
Bertolt Brecht's first play, produced by Jim Simpson and his lively Bat Theatre Company. The script suffers from many first-play problems, but it clearly presents several of Brecht's preoccupations, and Michael J. X. Gladis, as Baal, is provocative from the first word he speaks. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-2407.)

BETRAYAL
A revival of Harold Pinter's 1978 bleak comedy of manners about the blithe treachery of adultery and the thousand little lies that can make and break a friendship. Juliette Binoche, inexplicably, stars as a publisher's wife who has had a long affair with her husband's best friend, a literary agent. Binoche can do happy, she can do sad, but she brings no definition, no specificity to her role. Her words, and her silences, speak not volumes but leaflets. Liev Schreiber, as her lover, and John Slattery, as her husband, do better with their parts—particularly Slattery, who excels at combining emotional nakedness with reserve to portray the terribly comic aspects of trauma. Draggily directed by David Leveaux. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/27/00.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-9393.)

BOOK OF THE DEAD: SECOND AVENUE
John Moran's first techno-opera in five years, set in ancient Egypt and on New York City's Second Avenue, doesn't pack quite the same punch that his earlier works did. Despite the fact that the scenes and allegories are slow to mesh, Moran's method—he uses recorded sounds and voices to build his otherworldly environments—is strange, powerful, and unlike anything else you'll see in the theatre today. There's no describing it: you just have to go. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

COBB
An encore production of Lee Blessing's play about the baseball legend Ty Cobb, which was originally staged by the Melting Pot Theatre last spring. (Lucille Lortel Theatre, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

COMIC POTENTIAL
Or not. Alan Ayckbourn's futuristic fare about an android actress (Janie Dee) who becomes plagued by human feelings for an idealistic young screenwriter might have had the potential to be funny forty years ago, but today it's sub-sitcom pap. Even as a vehicle for the talents of the gravel-voiced British actress Dee, it falls embarrassingly short, despite some amusing moments. It also smacks of misogyny: Dee's programmable "actoid" is the sole woman in the show whose emotional makeup appeals to the men; her only competition is a pair of smart but dismissive lesbians and a desperate, angry, over-the-hill man-eater. Har. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

CRAVE
Deborah Harry stars in the late British playwright Sarah Kane's examination of the dark side of human relationships. (Axis, 1 Sheridan Sq. 807-9300.)

THE DINNER PARTY
Neil Simon's new comedy is set in an opulent restaurant in Paris, and his six characters—three divorced couples—are not the usual Simon-Americans of his "Suite" plays. They are French, or are meant to be. Still, the play is essentially traditional fare; the running, or limping, gags are in ready supply, and the secondhand shtick, often in the form of aeons-old alimony jokes, flows freely along this Boulevard of Broken Marriages. (11/6/00) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Eiko and Koma in "When Nights Were Dark," at BAM (see Dance).

MICHAEL JAMES O'BRIEN

DOWN THE GARDEN PATHS
Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson lead the cast in a new four-couple comedy by Anne Meara. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY
The latest edition of Gerard Alessandrini's ongoing musical satire of the players and the plays along the Great White Way. (Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.)

FOUR GUYS NAMED JOSÉ . . . AND UNA MUJER NAMED MARIA
This crowd-pleasing, crayon-colored revue of Latin song and dance is knowingly broad and hammy. But the talented cast sends up the singers and songs that helped create Latin stereotypes and delivers the remaining material—dance songs, songs of nostalgia for one's homeland, songs of love, songs about women named Maria—with exuberant wit and affection. (Blue Angel, 323 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE FULL MONTY
The musical version of the 1997 movie, about a group of unemployed factory workers who try to earn some cash by stripping, is faithful to the original story—even though the locale has been shifted from the North of England to Buffalo. It has all the spirit and charm of the original but, as befits a Broadway production, on a much larger, pizzazzier scale. Instead of being touched, you're likely to be moved up out of your seat by the display of musical and choreographic bravura onstage. Early on, Terrence McNally's book and David Yazbek's songs strike notes of class consciousness and unemployment-related low male self-esteem a little too hard, but soon enough the show's winning good humor and inventiveness kick in, and if you don't find yourself laughing consistently (and tearing up occasionally), well, then, maybe you don't *deserve* to see six men prancing around in red G-strings. The terrific cast, which includes Patrick Wilson, John Ellison Conlee, André De Shields, Emily Skinner, and Kathleen Freeman, is under the fine direction of Jack O'Brien, and the delightful dancing is courtesy of Jerry Mitchell. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

GERSHWIN'S AMERICAN RHAPSODY
KT Sullivan and Mark Nadler star in a musical revue celebrating the works of George Gershwin. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 239-6200.)

GORE VIDAL'S THE BEST MAN
Gore Vidal's sophisticated, elegant, and damned entertaining 1960 play about the politics of politics, whose mots are as eerily accurate for Shrub and Al as they were, originally, for Adlai and Tricky Dick. (10/2/00) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

THE HOSTAGE
Brendan Behan's 1960 play is set in that year, a moment of relative peace in Ireland, and it raises the question of whether anyone other than a few fanatics really cared anymore about the country's entanglement with England. Forty years on, Behan's political views are still fresh, and the play itself is a fascinating mixture of tragedy and fun, like a good pub tale. The talented cast is directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Dec. 10.)

JESUS HOPPED THE 'A' TRAIN
A six-week encore run of Stephen Adly Guirgis's drama about the relationship between two convicts in protective custody at Riker's Island. Philip Seymour Hoffman is the director. (East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 239-6200.)

JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK
Even a spirited performance by Jim Nelson, as the feckless, braggart "paycock" of the title, can't get this otherwise flat Roundabout Theatre production of Sean O'Casey's 1924 tragicomedy off the ground. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

KIT MARLOWE
David Grimm's drama examines the tempestuous life of the Elizabethan playwright Christopher Marlowe. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 3.)

THE LIGHT OUTSIDE
From the Flea Theatre, a black domestic comedy by Kate Robin. (41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-2407.)

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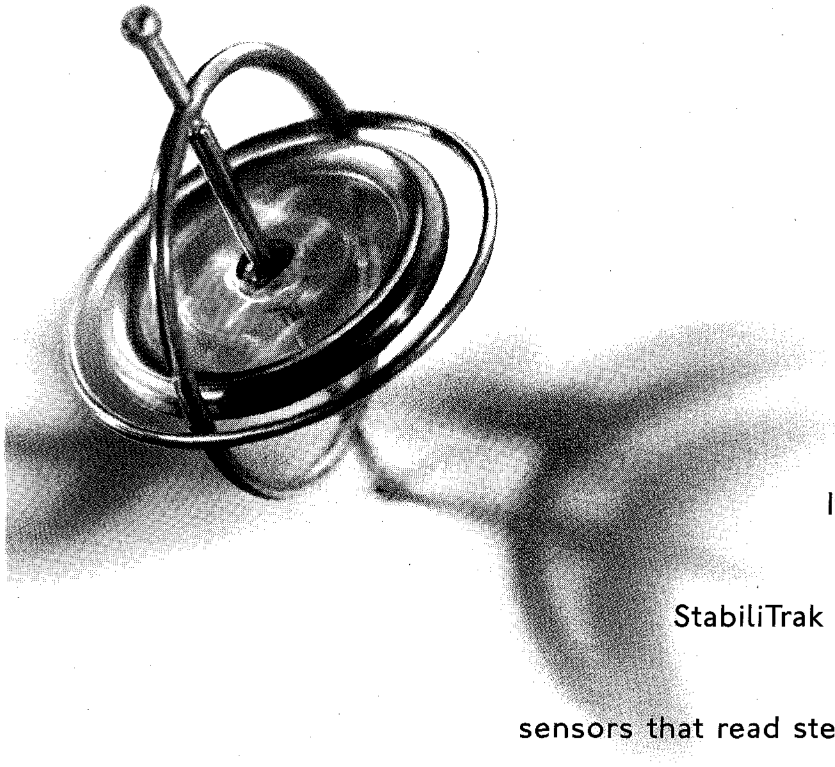

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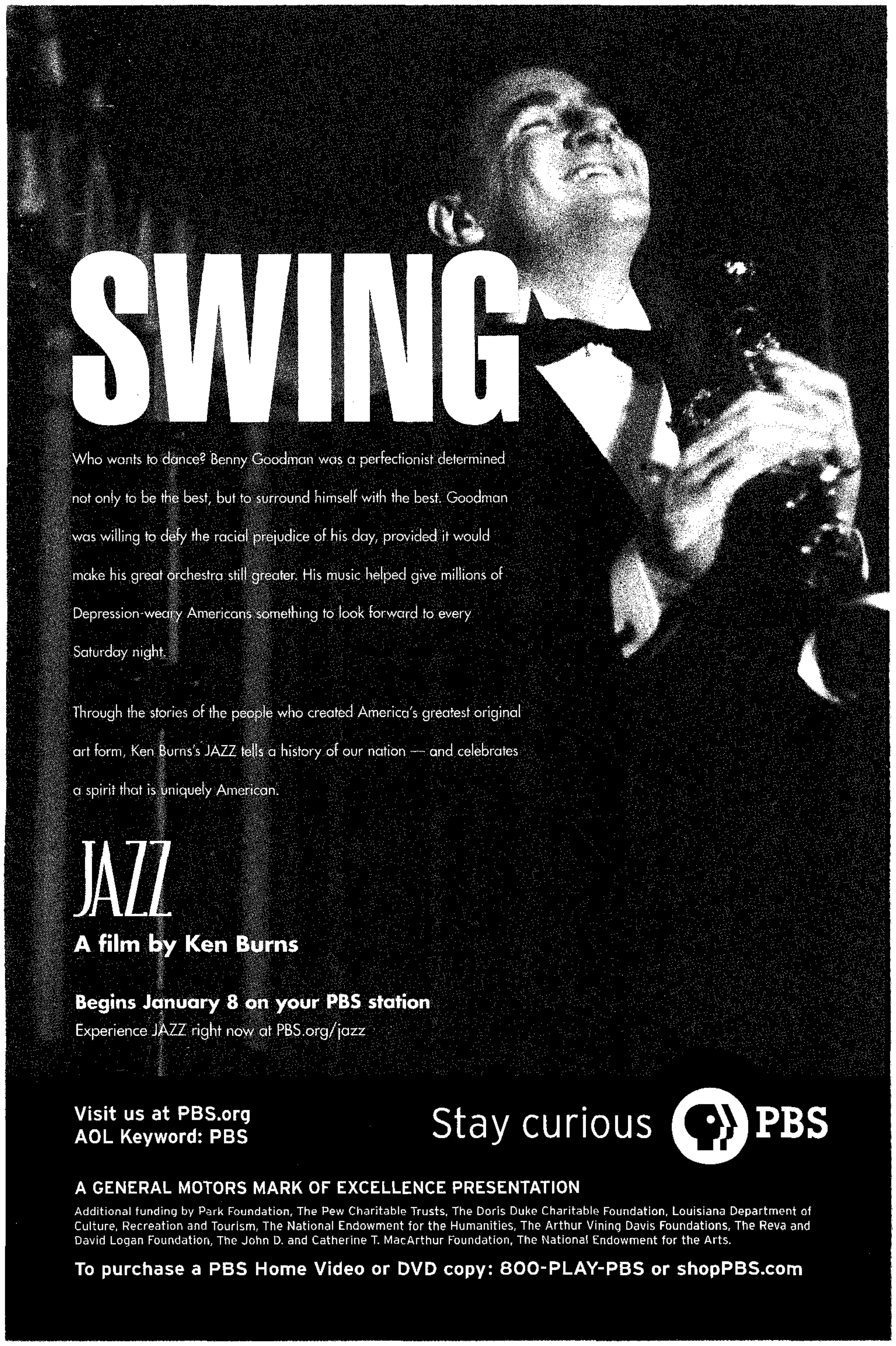
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LIVING IN THE WIND
Cheryl Freeman and Chad L. Coleman portray married ex-slaves trying to rebuild their lives after the Civil War, in a romantic drama by Michael Bradford. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

LYPSINKA! THE BOXED SET
The star (a.k.a. John Epperson) makes her first concert appearance in seven years. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 307-4100.)

MINT THEATRE COMPANY
Presenting a double bill of one-acts: Harley Granville-Barker's "Farewell to the Theatre" and George Kelley's "The Flattering Word." (311 W. 43rd St. 315-0231.)

POP NOTES

INVITING SOUNDS
A good party record should be as mixed and as moving as a carefully planned gathering. The following is a list of some of the best recent albums—be sure to check it twice.

Europeans have been enjoying Pepe Deluxé's **"Super Sound"** (Emperor Norton) for the past year. Luckily, the import is now available in the States. This Finnish trio, whose members go by the names of DJ Slow, Ja-Jazz, and James Spectrum, has a cut-and-paste aesthetic that makes for a wildly eclectic experience, full of hip-swaying hip-hop stylings, cinematic voice-overs, and big beats. And the puckish sense of humor that pervades the record links Pepe Deluxé with such dance-floor ironists as Beck.

For more serious fun, consider the latest album, **"Stankonia"** (Arista), by the Atlanta hip-hop outfit OutKast. OutKast's two members, André 3000 and Big Boi, have absorbed the spirit of George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic empire, particularly the down-and-dirty instrumentals and spacey philosophizing. And OutKast keeps things moving quickly: the album's first single, "B.O.B.," speeds along at a hundred and thirty-five beats per minute, like a techno record.

What would a party be without a little cheese? **"Arepa 3000"** (Luaka Bop), by the Venezuelan sextet Los Amigos Invisibles, is a guilty pleasure, a rich mix of thick disco grooves and tropical syncopation. The group's music travels back and forth across the recent history of dance, from a cover of the syrupy anthem "Amor" (a club hit for its composer, Jorge Spiteri, and his band Mañana in 1980) to New Wave keyboard pounding on "El Barro."

—*John J. Donohue*

PROOF
The Manhattan Theatre Club's staging of David Auburn's drama, starring Mary-Louise Parker, has reopened on Broadway. Daniel Sullivan is the director. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

RICHARD III
The Pearl Theatre Company's version of Shakespeare's play. (80 St. Mark's Pl. 505-3401. Closes Dec. 17.)

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
Rather than a revival of Richard O'Brien's 1973 musical, Christopher Ashley's production is an unsexy and oddly earnest homage to the 1975 cult-movie adaptation. It plays to the already converted (who can dance the Time Warp with the help of a ten-dollar "participation bag" containing confetti, a light-up key chain, and toilet paper), but it offers the rest of the audience no sense of irony and no insight into why, or how, O'Brien's glam tribute to fifties horror movies became such a phenomenon. The only air of self-parody comes from the impish Dick Cavett; as the narrator, he gives the show a shot of vitality with his improvised standup shtick and, if you're lucky, his version of the moonwalk. The rest of the casting is inspired (although Lea DeLaria and Joan Jett are sadly underused), but the

performers can't really compete with their celluloid counterparts. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

SAVED OR DESTROYED
Rattlestick starts the season with a Harry Kondoleon festival, beginning with this previously unproduced comedy. (Rattlestick Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl. 206-1515.)

THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE
Lily Tomlin is back on Broadway in the one-woman, thirteen-character show written for her by her longtime collaborator, Jane Wagner, and what's not to love about that? Tomlin is terrific—moving, funny, and as lithe and vibrant as she was when she first performed the show here, fifteen years ago. If anything, her characterizations are better now: they're grittier and less tinged with whimsy. Wagner's observations are so trenchant that you can't help wishing that she had written some new, up-to-date characters for this production, but, as it is, this is a chance to see a remarkable life force in action. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

SECRET HISTORY
The latest installment in Ping Chong's "Undesirable Elements" series, in which he creates a script from interviews with his cast, chosen for their stories of cultural displacement. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 529-1557.)

THE SYRINGA TREE
A tour-de-force solo drama, written by and starring South African native and first-time playwright Pamela Gien, who gives an extraordinary performance in all twenty-three roles. It's a love story, really, about the strong, lasting bond between a white girl and her black nanny in South Africa, which begins in 1965 and continues through the following twenty years of turbulent and violent upheavals over apartheid. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.)

TABLETOP
Rob Ackerman's real-time comedy, a behind-the-scenes look at television-commercial making. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Charles Busch's satire of New York intellectual angst, staged by Manhattan Theatre Club, has moved to Broadway. Linda Lavin, Tony Roberts, and Michele Lee star. Lynn Meadow is the director. (3/20/00) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

TALLULAH HALLELUJAH!
Tovah Feldshuh's engaging portrait of Tallulah Bankhead is set in 1956, at a U.S.O. benefit, where the stage-and-screen siren (played by Feldshuh) regales the audience with the lowdown on her life, several marvellous standards, and a bunch of charmingly dirty limericks. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

THE UNEXPECTED MAN
There are only two actors in this small gem by Yasmina Reza, the author of "Art," but they are not just any two—they are Alan Bates and the magnificent Eileen Atkins, who are sharing a compartment on a Paris-to-Frankfurt train. He is a writer, and she, unbeknownst to him, is his ideal reader; their private reflections weave around and play off each other until the two passengers finally address each other directly. Reza's artfulness in presenting their thoughts—his discontent, her insightful analysis of his books and rueful reminiscences of friendships—makes this a very grownup play about separateness and connection, about the art of life. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (11/6/00) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

WHAT THE BUTLER SAW
It's a treat to see Chloë Sevigny onstage, even in the New Group's inert production of Joe Orton's bawdy 1969 sex farce. The last few moments—when cases of mistaken identity have been solved, and all sets of clothing have been returned to their rightful owners—are sublime, but the road that leads to them is rather rocky. The director Scott Elliot's pacing is off, and his actors have a difficult time muscling the Wildean dialogue. There are laughs to be had here; they just come paired with groans. (Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

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DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The company returns with "The Nutcracker." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 870-5570. Nov. 28-30 and Dec. 5 at 6, Dec. 1 at 8, Dec. 2 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 3 at 1 and 5.)

ALVIN AILEY
Nov. 29 at 7: "Double Exposure" and "Revelations." ♦ Nov. 30 at 8, Dec. 2 at 2, and Dec. 3 at 7:30: "Night Creature," "Pas de Duke," "The River," and "Revelations." ♦ Dec. 1 at 8: "Divining," "Fever Swamp," "Following the Subtle Current Upstream," and "Revelations." ♦ Dec. 2 at 8: "Grace," "Double Exposure," and "Revelations." ♦ Dec. 3 at 3: "Divining," "Fever Swamp," "Following the Subtle Current Upstream," and "Grace." ♦ Dec. 5 at 8: "Blues Suite," "Cry," "Phases," and "Revelations." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Through Dec. 31.)

"WHEN NIGHTS WERE DARK"
For the past twenty-five years, in such works as "Land," "Wind," "River," and "Rust," the husband-and-wife team of Eiko and Koma have remade themselves in the images of rocks, trees, and creeping things. Eiko says, "Our craving is to present something that is dreamlike, instinctive, or even destined." In their latest offering, the two reimagine the birth of humanity as they move about inside a driftwood nest on wheels, an eight-by-fourteen-foot rotating construction hung with cheesecloth stalactites and leaves that glow from the scads of tiny embedded lights. The James Hall Worship and Praise Choir stands at the stage's lip throughout, and hums, she says, "like the inside of a body." (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Nov. 29-Dec. 2 at 7:30 and Dec. 3 at 3.)

SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY
The eighteen-member company performs "Air and Other Invisible Forces," choreographed by Graeme Murphy. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 28-Dec. 1 at 8, Dec. 2 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 3 at 2.)

BILL SHANNON, A.K.A. CRUTCHMASTER
The onetime skateboarder continues to indulge antigravitational urges, even though a rare ailment, Legg-Calve-Perthes disease (his bones cannot continuously support his weight), has forced him to do his dancing on crutches. For this engagement, he alternates performances of "Old Rain" and "Regarding the Fall" (the former starts at 8:30, the latter at 10). (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Nov. 30-Dec. 3. Through Dec. 10.)

IMPROVISATION FESTIVAL/NY
The ninth annual adventure offers spontaneous choreography performed by a roster of quick-witted dancers, including Katie Duck, Mary Overlie, Kirstie Simson, Wendell Beavers, Martin Sonderkamp, Viveca Vázquez, and Max Factory. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Nov. 28, Nov. 30-Dec. 1, and Dec. 3 at 8:30. ♦ **Note:** For information about other festival events around the city, call Movement Research, at 539-2611.)

"ANOTHER TELEPATHIC THING"
Big Dance Theatre, under the direction of Paul Lazar and choreographer Annie-B Parson, recasts Mark Twain's "The Mysterious Stranger" as the story of Satan in L.A., using sections from actual Hollywood audition tapes. (The Performing Garage, 35 Wooster St. 966-3651. Nov. 29-Dec. 2 at 8. Through Dec. 9.)

"AFRO-CUBAN SANTERÍA: MUSIC AND DANCE OF THE GODS"
Emilio Barreto, a practitioner of Santería who specializes in drumming ceremonies, collaborates with the choreographer Alberto Morgan and the twenty-two-member Santísimo Ensemble, in a series of stories of the Yoruban gods. The second half of the show turns secular, with a suite of rumbas. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Dec. 2 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

TIM MC GRAW / FAITH HILL
A comely double bill featuring two of country music's biggest new stars. McGraw is probably still best known as the son of the baseball pitcher Tug McGraw, but his most recent record, 1999's "Place in the Sun," shows real growth and a genuine gift for high-lonesome prairie ballads. / Though Hill has yet to ascend to the success level of crossover goddesses such as Shania Twain, she's getting awfully close. Her 1999 hit, "Breathe," has now sold three million copies, and, with even more relentless marketing of her blond beauty, she could easily end up as one of the biggest stars in popular music. (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. Nov. 30 at 8.)

JAZZ COMPOSERS COLLECTIVE
An emphasis on solid writing and orchestration, as well as healthy band-leading acumen, distinguishes each of the members of the Jazz Composers Collective. A double bill with **Michael Blake** and his band Free Association and **Steven Bernstein** and the Millennial Territory Orchestra offers the work of two shrewd players who best express themselves by way of well-crafted ensembles. (New School, 55 W. 13th St. For more information, call 995-1552. Nov. 30 at 8.)

K. D. LANG
The velvet-voiced ingénue snipped a bit of a Camus quote for the title of her latest record, "Invincible Summer," and there is indeed an existential flavor to the odd trajectory of her career, which has moved restlessly from genre to genre. "Invincible Summer" finds the former Patsy Cline disciple exploring the champagne-and-cufflink pop of Burt Bacharach and Doris Day. Lang strikes the pose with tongue firmly in cheek, and the effect is startling. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Dec. 2 at 8.)

THE ARDOIN FAMILY
For years the accordionist Alphonse (Bois Sec) Ardoin and the fiddler Canray Fontenot were the country's leading ambassadors of *la musique créole*, a foot-stomping string-fed precursor to contemporary zydeco. Fontenot died in 1995, and Bois Sec isn't making this trip, but the tradition lives on, with Bois Sec's son, Morris, on guitar, and his grandson, Dexter, on accordion. The fiddler Dennis Stroughmatt rounds out the trio. (La Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, at 13th St. For more information, call 685-7597. Dec. 3 at 7.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

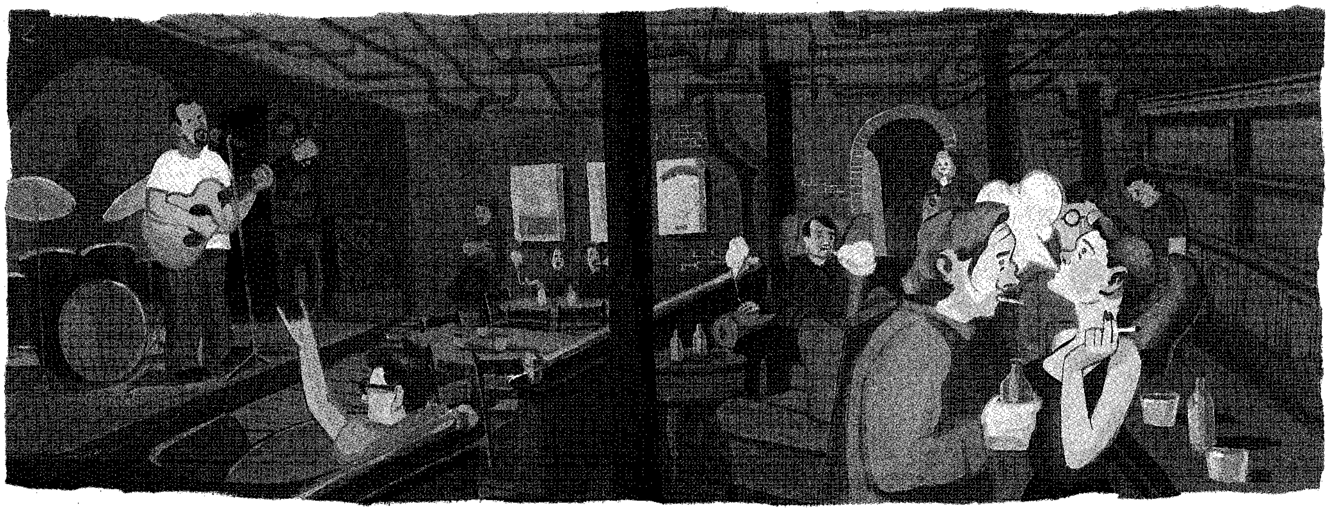
B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
243 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Nov. 30: **Oumou Sangre.** Known as the Madonna of Mali, this thirty-one-year-old singer lets loose in an otherworldly, serpentine voice, which is often backed by gently loping guitars, forlorn violins, and distant percussion.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Dec. 2: **David Johansen and the Harry Smiths.** Beautiful American music. Johansen's accomplished acoustic band takes its name from the man who put together the hugely influential "Anthology of American Folk Music" (1952). They use the songs and the spirit of those records as a jumping-off point for an evening of folk, country, and blues tunes that are heartfelt, funny, and often very strange indeed.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Nov. 30: **They Might Be Giants**, performing the entirety of its 1990 album, "Flood," which just recently went platinum.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S.
73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dec. 1-2: **Levon Helm**, the former Band drummer and sometime actor ("Coal Miner's Daughter"), settles in with his blues band, the Barn Burners, featuring his daughter, Amy, on lead vocals.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—Ever since Tramps shut down last September, the city has been short one venue for live music. That's changed now that Steve Weitzeman, who booked the acts at Tramps for the last ten years, has started lining up bands for this new, subterranean club. The space is about a third the size of Tramps, and according to Weitzeman it's "fan friendly and musician friendly." That means no drink minimums and no smoking (there's an upstairs lounge for those who must light up). "I can't bring in Keith Richards," Weitzeman laments. "I wanted him for New Year's Eve. I told him I'd let him smoke a cigarette onstage, but he won't come."



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Instead, look for such performers as **Dan Hicks** (the Bay Area subversive stops by on Nov. 29 with his brand of disarmingly pungent country-flavored rock), **Graham Parker** (here on Nov. 30 with songs from his many albums and stories from his début short-story collection, "Carp Fishing on Valium"), and **Tony Joe White** (the swamp-rocking author of "Polk Salad Annie," "Rainy Night in Georgia," and countless other hits returns to New York City for the first time in fifteen years on Dec. 2, touring in support of his sharp new album, "One Hot July"). And Weitzeman promises more. "It's going to be everything: blues, rock, funk, country, zydeco. Just like a mini-Tramps."

WETLANDS
161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Dec. 3: The **Wild Magnolias,** a troupe of Mardi Gras Indians led by the gravel-voiced Bo (Big Chief) Dollis. The group takes the stage in sparkling headdresses, and whips up some of the funkiest music on this continent.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Django Reinhardt, the amazing Gypsy guitarist, is undergoing a revival thanks to recent reissues of his recordings; some pointed criticism; an inventive tribute, "Chasin' the Gypsy," by the saxophonist James Carter; and Woody Allen's "Sweet and Lowdown," which places him at its mythic center. Not that Reinhardt ever lost his iconic stature; nearly fifty years after his death his inimitable magic remains inspiring and mysterious. From Nov. 29-Dec. 2 the guitar wizard is the focus of a well-deserved festival that brings together some of his most accomplished disciples, including the guitarists **Bireli Lagrene, Frank Vignola, Bucky Pizzarelli,** and even Reinhardt's son, **Babik.** The violinist **Regina Carter** and the Nashville fiddle sensation **Mark O'Connor** will also be on hand to give props to Django's indispensable partner, Stephane Grappelli. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Dec. 3: The **Chick Corea** trio. Corea, a stylist whose nineteen-sixties and -seventies work is still being dissected and emulated by younger generations, is experiencing a midlife creative resurgence. The success of his formidable acoustic band, Origin, has been reflected in Corea's own work: two recent solo albums find him as playful and adventurous as ever. This rare trio appearance should be a treat.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through Dec. 31, **Bobby Short.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Barbara Carroll** is in attendance through Dec. 30.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Dec. 3: The guitarist **John Scofield** favors tricky, asymmetrical lines over generic flash. Where his peers tend to be marathon runners, he's an ambler. The key to his appeal is simple: within this cultivated improviser beats the heart of a twisted bluesman; Scofield flaunts the funk, grabs the groove, and generally proves that, for a father figure to a younger generation, he's still got plenty of juice. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Dec. 3: A Kenny Dorham festival, with **Don Sickler, Eric Alexander, Ronnie Mathews, Ron Carter, Kenny Washington,** and others. The trumpeter and composer Dorham may not have become as famous as his peers Clifford Brown and Freddie Hubbard, but among knowing musicians his place in the pantheon is secure. Celebrating this hard-bop master is a solid repertory unit led by the invaluable trumpeter, arranger, and indefatigable Dorham champion Sickler. Dining.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (864-6662)—Nov. 30-Dec. 2: The **George Coleman** quartet. Although he's a New York institution—when has he not been around?—the saxophonist Coleman is actually a proud son of Memphis, Tennessee; he's part of the nineteen-fifties jazz community that included Booker Little and Phineas Newborn. Coleman put in some great but strangely undervalued work with Max Roach and Miles Davis before branching out on his own some three decades ago. Coleman's tenor speaks an authentic, harmonically complex dialect that mates Southern grit with bebop finesse.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—**Bill Frisell** (here with his trio through Dec. 3) approaches the guitar the way Miles Davis played trumpet: he's a radical thinker who has transformed the very nature of his instrument. And, like Davis at his best, Frisell loves a lot of leg room in his improvising—where extra space terrifies others, it quickens his blood. Frisell sounds like no one else, mating the tonality of rock with the classic ease and economy of a guitarist like Jim Hall. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliot Collection."** Sixteen hundred years before artists like Lawrence Weiner and Joseph Kosuth began using text in art, the Chinese cultivated the art of calligraphy. This exhibition, billed as the most comprehensive ever assembled in the West, features more than a hundred examples of the graceful form, described by the eleventh-century poet Su Shi as "a picture of

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the mind." Though an understanding of the Chinese language would enhance the experience, it is by no means a requirement. Often the characters seem more choreographed than drawn with ink and brush: witness the looping arabesques of the Ming-dynasty artist Dong Qichang or the angular lyricism (think Martha Graham) of Zhou Lianggong. Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"The Year One: Art of the Ancient World East and West,"** a selection of antiquities from the permanent collection, all of which were created around 1 A.D. Through Jan. 14. ♦ **"Art and the Empire City"** presents paintings, photographs, and decorative art from one of New York's early periods of irrational exuberance, between the completion of the Erie Canal, in 1825, and the beginning of the Civil War, in 1861. Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"The Golden Deer of Eurasia: Scythian and Sarmatian Treasures from the Russian Steppes."** Through Feb. 4. ♦ **"Rain of the Moon: Silver in Ancient Peru."** Through April 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

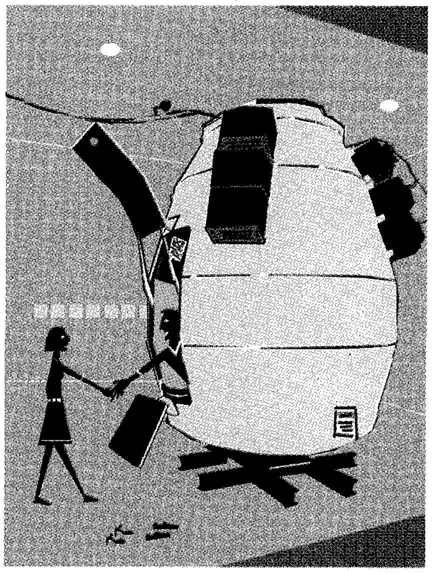
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"Open Ends,"** the third and final installment of **"MOMA 2000,"** the yearlong exhibition devoted to the art of the past century, covers art from 1960 to the present. Like its predecessors, the current show is divided into segments; this first one includes several large-scale works and installations, by Cai Guo-Qiang, James Rosenquist, Pipilotti Rist, Cindy Sherman, and Gerhard Richter, which suggest the themes that the later segments amplify. Through Jan. 2. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—One design icon salutes another: the museum devotes its spiralling Frank Lloyd Wright spaces to an exhibition that measures the impact of Giorgio Armani, the original relaxed-fit couturier. Through Jan. 17. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

KIM DEMARCO



"Mixer," by Lot/Ek, at Urbach.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Edward Steichen began as a pictorialist, photographing the sweet and fuzzy scenes fashionable in the first decades of the twentieth century. Later, he began experimenting with sharper focus and stronger lines, turning still-lifes of vegetables into stark modernist abstractions, and he came to see photography as a way to make a strong and immediate impression. Not coincidentally, his commercial work for magazines and advertisements became highly salable. Steichen's celebrity portraits—of Garbo and Dietrich for *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*—still look contemporary. Through Feb. 4. ♦ **"Roni Horn: Still Water (The River Thames, for Example), 1999."** Through Jan. 14. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—**"Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga."** The Viking age lasted some three hundred years—from 750 to 1050 A.D.—but its cultural legacy is far-reaching, as both football fans and opera buffs will attest. (And, were it not for the Vikings, we might have a four-day week; the words "Wednesday," "Thursday," and "Friday" all derive from Norse). To commemorate the thousandth anniversary of Leif Eriksson's landing on American shores, the museum sets out to demonstrate that there was more to Norsemen than pillage and plunder (and to teach us, ahem, that they never actually wore horned helmets). Archeological artifacts range from manuscripts to human remains (there's evidence of Christian burial practices) to a whalebone slab used as an ironing board (a Viking invention). The show's centerpiece is a three-quarter-scale, forty-foot-long model of a merchant ship, but its hidden treasure is a selection of nine of the Lewis chessmen, figures made of walrus ivory, each carved with a unique expression, unearthed on a beach in Greenland in 1831. Through Jan. 21. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—A retrospective devoted to Lee Krasner ends its national tour in the artist's birthplace. Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"Hip-Hop Nation: Roots, Rhymes, and Rage"** presents videos, clothing and accessories, manuscripts of lyrics, F.B.I. letters, magazine covers, and installations that catalogue reactions to the genre. Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Gold of the Nomads: Scythian Treasures from Ancient Ukraine."** Through Jan. 21. ♦ **"Nardo di Cione: The Reuniting of an Altarpiece."** Through Feb. 18. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

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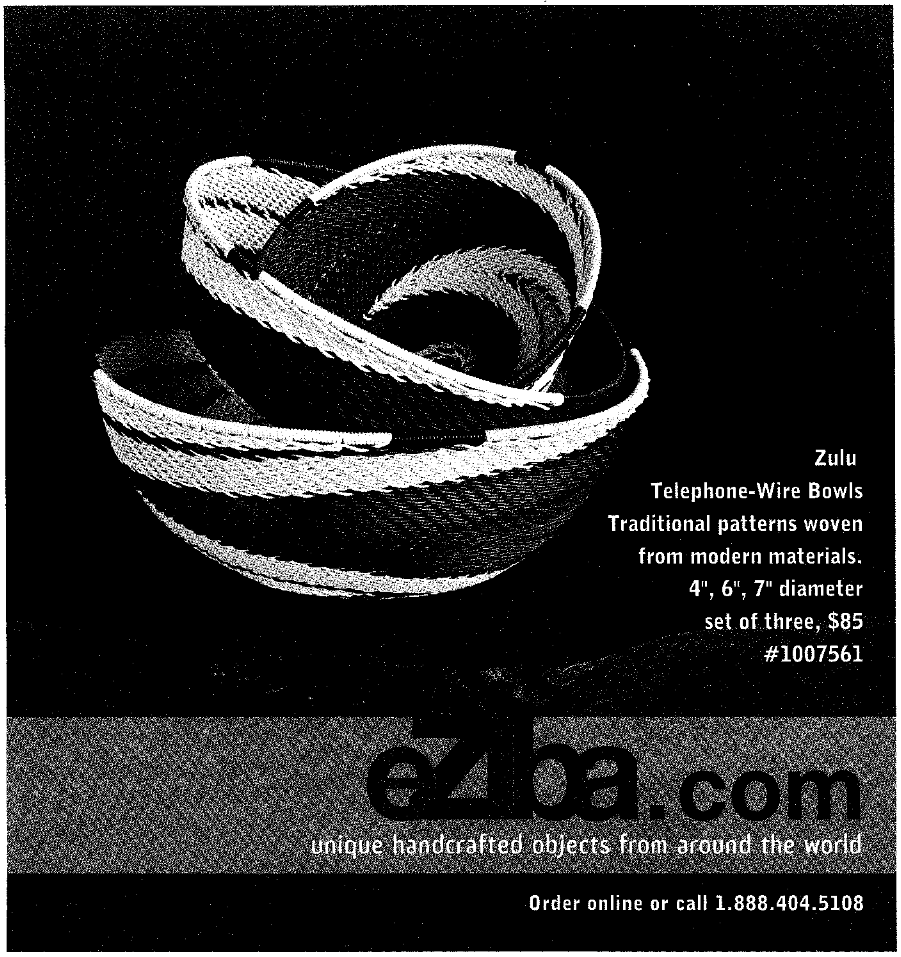

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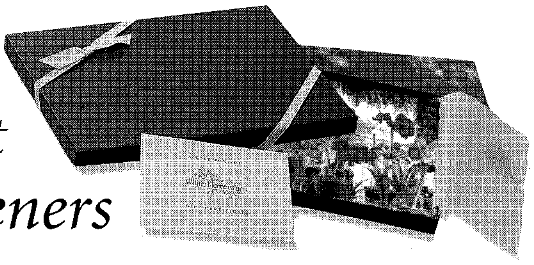

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GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

TONY CRAGG
Thirteen predictably impressive sculptures by an abstract artist of protean gifts. The range of materials is stunning, from the bronze "Formulation (Right Turning, Left Turning)," which has a patina of pencil-eraser red, to the exotic orange Kertu wood of "Finnish Totem," which rises from the floor like a frozen tornado. Twisting and turning are formal motifs in many of the objects. Among the most impressive is "Secretion (Urge)," which is covered in reptilian scales and stands nearly ten feet tall. It pulls you around it with an almost centripetal force, until you feel that the thing might swallow you whole. Through Dec. 30. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.)

TABLES FOR TWO

MAMLOUK
211 E. 4th St. (529-3477)—"Do you ask your grandmother what's on the menu, darling?" asks Najah, the manager-hostess at this dusky, pillow-filled spot. "Well, this is like Grandma's house, sweetie. You eat what we feed you." This gentle threat is followed by a two-hour session of comparable sweet talk and ribbing (Najah says she chooses one table to "pick on" each night) and some rich, extremely gratifying Middle Eastern food.

The place is always full during the twice-nightly seatings—there are tables for two along the walls and roomier, brass-topped tables in the back or front, with sofas perfect for post-gorge lounging. Six courses are served at each meal, the exact makeup of which depends on the mood of the cook, Wisam El-Masri. Raw and pickled vegetables always lead off, followed by a generous plate of five dips. The usual suspects, hummus and baba ghanouj—the latter dressed with pomegranate seeds—are served alongside a tasty avocado salad, roasted red peppers, and the complex *muhammara*, a ground mixture of peppers and walnuts. All of these dishes can be eaten with vegetables or mini-pitas, but it's better to smear them on *zatter* bread seasoned with olive oil, sesame seeds, and thyme. A small but zippy *fatoush* salad arrives next, with mint and pita croutons.

Middle Eastern music wails on in the background as a vegetable stew robust enough to be a main course arrives, followed by a couple of meat dishes, usually chicken, lamb, or shrimp. Supreme among these are *fatteh*, a chicken dish with pine nuts in a lemony yogurt sauce, and *kebab halebi*, meatballs of seasoned lamb in a hearty tomato sauce. Various teas are available, as are decent wines—a house red or white by the glass and a few bottles, including the Lebanese Ksara, which has an interesting peppery taste.

After a dessert of honey-nut or cheese baklava, or the intriguing *zarda* (Iraqi rice pudding with apples and walnuts), you'll want to recline and smoke the hookah. The tobacco is mixed with honey and flavoring—strawberry, apple, mint, or rose—and, thanks to hydrofiltration, is milder than the lightest of cigarettes. Any of the servers will light the big, garish bong, outfitted with individual plastic mouthpieces, and bring it to your table. One waiter, named Hassem, smokes nightly, and he likes to rhapsodize about the spiritual effects of strawberry tobacco with a faraway look in his eyes. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for dinner only. Prix fixe: $30.)
—Matt Dellinger

RICHARD DIEBENKORN
Fans of the artist's luminous "Ocean Park" series may not cotton to this show of earlier work—fine examples of gestural Abstract Expressionism from the early fifties. This is a scrappier, earthier Diebenkorn, not awash in Bay Area light, but loading up on oranges and grays that reflect his homes in the New Mexico desert and Urbana, Illinois. Still, the brushy bands of pink and green—horizons piled on horizons—in the painting "Berkeley 47" hint at things to come. Through Dec. 9. (Lawrence Rubin Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 445-0444.)

JOHN MC CRACKEN
Since the late sixties, McCracken has applied many coats of resin to his minimalist sculptures; the pieces practically dissolve in the light that they simultaneously reflect and embody. Here, for the first time, he turns to stainless steel, with shining results. The freestanding, highly polished eight-foot-tall columns loom with an unearthly quality; both mystical and futuristic, they are like a Stonehenge for cyberpunks. Through Dec. 23. (Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 517-8677.)

"YOUNG NORDIC DESIGN: GENERATION X"
To inaugurate its handsome new Park Avenue digs, Scandinavia House is showcasing the talents of young designers from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. The items on display in the third-floor galleries range from a gravity-free jacket, bobbing on a jet of air like so much Saran wrap, to a portable bentwood lounger that resembles a snowboard. One cavil: the jam-packed installation would benefit from more breathing room. The Finnish team Valvomo solves that problem with the flick of a switch; the shade on its Globlow lamp puffs up like a cloud when illuminated and deflates when turned off. Through Dec. 30. (58 Park Ave., at 38th St. 779-3587.)

Short List

SUE COE
Galerie St. Étienne, 24 W. 57th St. 245-6734. Through Jan. 6.

R. B. KITAJ
Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Through Dec. 2.

MARK MAHOSKY
Rickards, 1045 Madison Ave., at 79th St. 924-0858. Through Dec. 20.

JOAN MIRÓ
Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Through Jan. 6.

JILL MOSER
Ganz, 25 E. 73rd St. 535-1977. Through Dec. 14.

GEORGE NICK
Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345. Through Dec. 23.

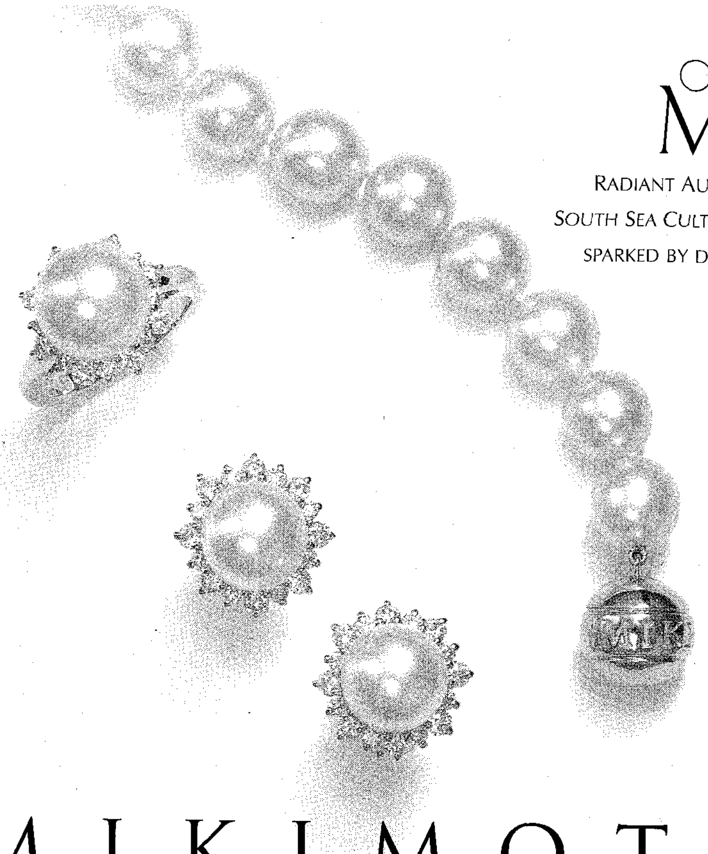
GEORGE TOOKER / BEN SHAHN
DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Through Dec. 29.

CY TWOMBLY
Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 77th St. 744-2313. Through Jan. 27.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

POLLY APFELBAUM
Like a malicious house guest, Apfelbaum creates stains—little spreading blobs of indelible color. But these stains, unlike those of the domestic variety, occur in hundreds of hues, from Merlot crimson and egg-yolk orange to brilliant yellow, violet, and peacock green. The hues, dripped onto swatches of velvet, are then carefully cut out and arranged on gallery floors, in vast, spiralling nebulae. The three on view here, collectively titled "Powerpuff," are intricate and lovely, if uncommunicative. One imagines them as clusters of gorgeous viruses, preening happily as they multiply. Through Dec. 23. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460.)

MEL BOCHNER
The Conceptualist-turned-painter has made a U-turn back into conceptualism. One group of new works features a quotation from Wittgenstein, rendered



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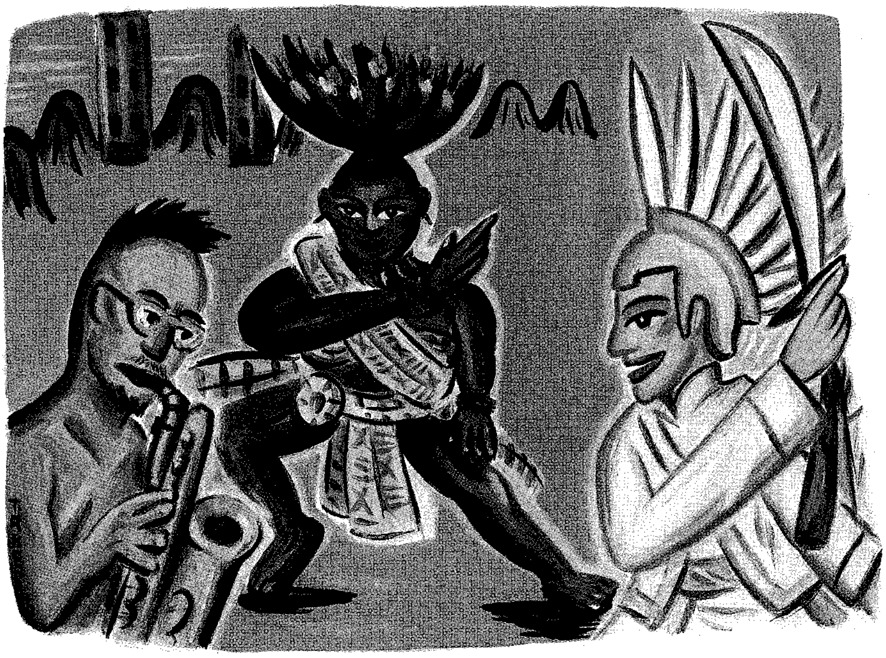
in overlapping English and German scripts. The other consists of colored canvases marked with their actual measurements (twelve inches, five feet, twenty-one feet, etc.). Thirty years ago, such raw empiricism and text pictures might have seemed provocative. Today, this kind of lacklustre cerebral gesture looks like a spoof. Where has the other Bochner, the painter of vigorous geometric abstractions, gone? Through Dec. 20. (Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 627-1018.)

LEBBEUS WOODS / LOT/EK

A collection of notebooks and drawings by the visionary architect, who taught for many years at Cooper Union. Though this show doesn't offer a complete picture of his fiercely impractical imagination, it's a useful teaser. Even to those unfamiliar with his work, Woods's nearly abstract imagery is apt to feel oddly familiar, partly because its influence has shown up everywhere lately, from science-fiction illustration to the work of Frank Gehry. / For "Mixer," the modish architecture firm Lot/Ek (modishly pronounced "low tech") has transformed a concrete-mixing tank into a bright-yellow "media cocoon," complete with satellite TV, surveillance cameras, and foam insulation. Unlike earlier versions of this popular idea (Andrea Zittel's "Escape Vehicles," for example), Lot/Ek's doesn't include amenities or ventilation. So one imagines "Mixer" as a kind of latter-day pharaonic tomb, where the dead can keep track of the living in perpetuity. Through Dec. 22. (Urbach, 526 W. 26th St. 627-0974.)



TAKESHI TADATSU

Fred Ho's opera "Warrior Sisters," a combination of African and Asian music, jazz, and martial arts, continues its run at the Kitchen (see Classical).

SUE WILLIAMS

Williams, once just about the angriest woman in the art world, has now completed her decade-long metamorphosis into a sort of blissed-out innocent. Her new paintings are pure aerobic abstractions, with big loops and scribbles of red, yellow, and blue on white grounds. Splashes and drips are kept to a minimum; so is any kind of design impulse. The results have an utterly limber, volatile grace, like an ice-skater doing warmup exercises or a graffiti artist loosening his arm. De Kooning, at the end of his life, became the Fred Astaire of this kind of kinesthetic calligraphy; Williams could almost be his Ginger Rogers. Through Dec. 16. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

Short List

OLAFUR ELIASSON

Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St.
414-4144. Through Dec. 2.

DAMIEN HIRST

Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.
Through Dec. 16.

BROOKIE MAXWELL

Gallery 138, at 138 W. 17th St. 633-0703.
Through Dec. 14.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

KIM DINGLE

If anyone really deserves to be called a bad-girl artist, it is Dingle, who paints rampaging tykes in frilly dresses and counsels younger artists to "take off all your clothes, put on a diaper, and regress." In the misbehavior department, Dingle's protagonists, a pair of enfants terribles named Fatty and Fudge, continue to lead by example: in recent monoprint-like paintings on vellum, the girls brawl, puke, moon, scrawl "SHET" on blackboards, and finally scale a schoolyard fence and light out for the territories. While some may find all this tomboyish mayhem a little too "empowering," the best pictures seem genuinely raucous, like a pint-size alternative to the W.W.F. Through Dec. 22. (Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St. 431-3685.)

LAURIE SIMMONS AND PETER WHEELWRIGHT / WANG DU

A short computer-animated film about Simmons and Wheelwright's Kaleidoscope House shows the toy's plastic floors, ceilings, stairs, rails, countertops, and distinctive colored see-through walls flying into place faster than you can say "Some assembly required." In fact, parents, children, and art collectors all over will be putting together their own this Christmas—the Bozart toy company, which specializes in collaborations with contemporary artists, just put the house on the market. A finished model, complete with the hip doll family manufactured for it (featuring the artists as parents) and a newly designed Pool Pavilion (not yet in production), sits on a table in the center of the room. Interior photographs around the gallery walls hint at the breadth of the Kaleidoscope House's growing catalogue of accessories—collections of miniature furniture and art, including tiny works by Peter Halley, Carroll Dunham, and Cindy Sherman. The aural backdrop for all this is martial music escaping from Wang Du's "Défilé," a diorama of Chinese military might mounted on a fashion-show catwalk. Wang's figures, which include one separately mounted pro-democracy demonstrator with a slingshot, are huge but are somehow as doll-like as the mini-hipsters next door. Simmons and Wheelwright through Dec. 2; Wang through Dec. 23. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

For this last SoHo show before the inevitable migration to Chelsea of its downtown branch, Pace Wildenstein has enlisted Robert Rauschenberg's latest, largely white canvases. Each has several images scattered on it, as if the artist had been half-heartedly swiping at the canvas with a magic paint roller that laid down scenes instead of flat white. His perhaps too picturesque subjects, rendered incompletely in blurred, home-movie color, include a dog, the ocean, a tree, a swing. There is an illusion of ease, encouraged by yards of relaxing white space, but in fact Rauschenberg says the work was "very hard to do. The hardest thing since I erased Bill [de Kooning]'s drawing." Through Dec. 23. (142 Greene St. 431-9224.)

Short List

NANCY BALLIETT

Atlantic, 40 Wooster St. 219-3183.
Through Dec. 16.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S

The house returns after Thanksgiving with a surfeit of sales: Nov. 29 at 10:15 A.M.: American Indian art works, with an emphasis on textiles, pottery, and baskets. ♦ Nov. 30 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: A range of American painting, drawing, and sculpture, including works by Prendergast, O'Keefe, Andrew Wyeth, and many others. ♦ Dec. 1-2 at 2: Twentieth-century decorative arts and furniture. ♦ Dec. 2 at 10:15 A.M.: A selection of *pâte de verre* by Gabriel Argy-Rousseau. ♦ Dec. 2 at 3: Glasswork by Louis Comfort Tiffany. ♦ Dec. 5 at 10:15 A.M.: Contemporary painting from India, including work by M. F. Husain and Tyeb Mehta. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S

Nov. 29: American paintings, drawings, and sculpture, including works by Childe Hassam and Winslow Homer. ♦ Nov. 30: Cigars from the Dominican Republic and preëmbargo Cuba. ♦ Dec. 1: To complement the cigars, an auction of fine wine. ♦ Dec. 5: Precious and semiprecious stones, including rubies, sapphires, and a variety of pearls. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

PHILLIPS

Dec. 4: Design work by some pioneers of modernism, including Edgar Brandt, Gerrit Rietveld, Marcel Breuer, and Johannes Itten. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830.)

SWANN

Nov. 30: Printed and manuscript Americana. Among the star lots are Abigail Mather's copy of Increase Mather's "Some Important Truths Concerning Conversion" and two hundred and eight consecutive editions of John Fenno's Federalist "Gazette of the United States," with issues concerning the Bill of Rights and the inauguration of President Washington. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

ROBERT ADAMS

More than two hundred of Adams's articulate black-and-white photographs, one complete set of each of two major series, are on show here: "What We Bought: The New World (Scenes from the Denver Metropolitan Area, 1970-74)" and "California (Views of the Los Angeles Basin, 1978-83)." The work surveys the dawn of suburbia in the title areas and, with its cautious and benevolent perspective, surpasses more recent, kitsch photographs of similar subject matter. Adams's point of view shifts comfortably from landscapes like "Long Beach, on Signal Hill," which shows a stand of fragile trees exiled to a ridge above the sprawling city, to portraits of consumers pushing half-full shopping carts

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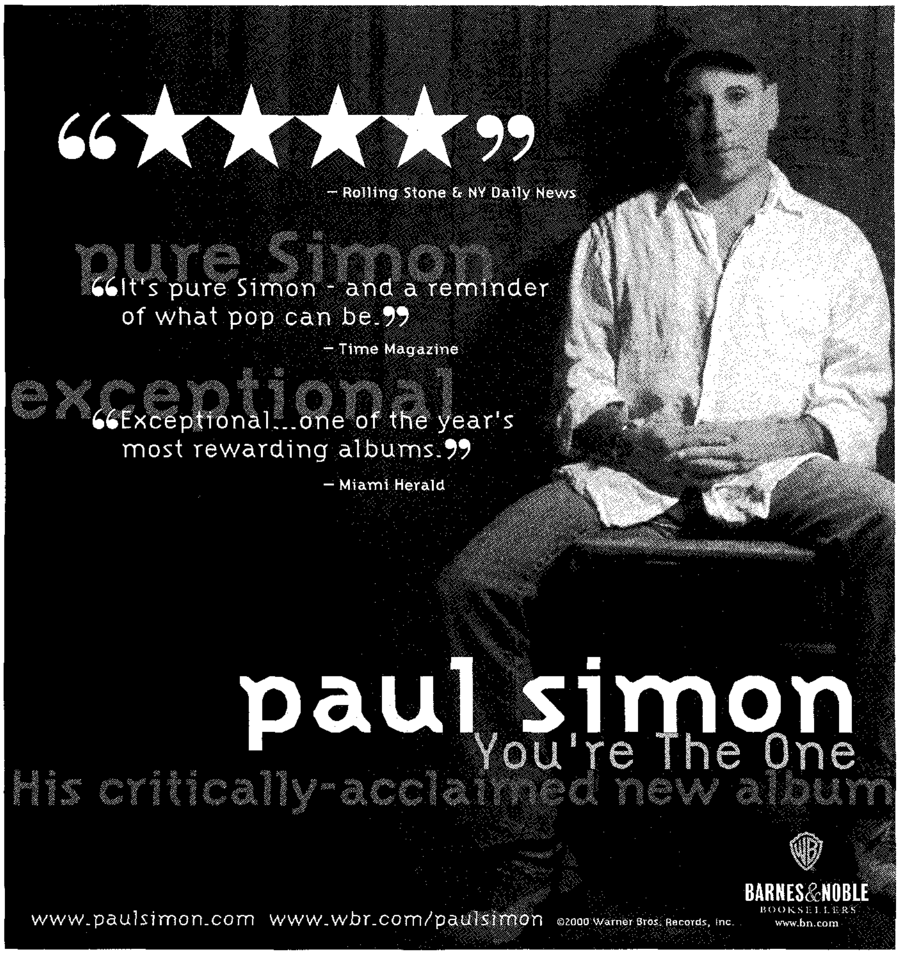

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through new supermarket aisles. Elsewhere in the gallery, Adams captures abandoned eucalyptus and palm trees rotting at the roots while tract homes and elevated freeways begin to multiply. Through Dec. 2. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.)

SIMPSON KALISHER
Like Walker Evans and Garry Winogrand, this mid-century American street photographer fuses the city's passing configurations of subjects into lasting images. One picture shows a hat-wearing, cigar-puffing New Yorker exhaling a wisp of smoke that billows into a huge white cloud and fills half the frame. The print appears to document miraculous lung capacity but in fact demonstrates Kalisher's skill and humor—he caught the man's smoky breath as it overlapped with a stream of steam rising from a manhole. Through Dec. 23. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)

HANS-CHRISTIAN SCHINK
Schink's large-format color pictures document one recent by-product of German reunification: the development of a vast new highway network in the former East Germany. These latest Autobahns are intended to encourage the flow of industry and prosperity into the *neue Länder*, but they are instead a new kind of no man's land. Schink, an unlikely heir to the nineteenth-century Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich, presents each concrete bridge and overpass as a breathtaking ruin, monumental and deserted in the dewy morning light. The roadside rest stop in "A 14 Rastplatz Plötzetal" speaks volumes as counterpart to verdant groves in the distance. Through Dec. 15. (Goethe Institute, 1014 Fifth Ave., at 83rd St. 439-8700.)

GEORGE TICE
This tight retrospective of some thirty pictures made over the past forty-five years shows Tice's range as a photographer—landscape, still-life, and portraiture—and as a master of black-and-white printing. In Tice's hands, each negative yields a print that suits its visual and emotional content. "Shaker Interior, Sabbathday Lake, Maine," which shows a pitcher in a bowl, is rendered in an austere but elegant eight-by-ten-inch palladium print. "Country Road, Lancaster, Pennsylvania" is a small, almost snapshot-size, cold-toned silver print of a VW Bug headed straight for the lens. Among the largest pictures in the show, and arguably one of the finest suburban nocturnes in photography, is "Petit's Mobil Station, Cherry Hill, New Jersey." In it, a giant, many-legged water tower just beyond the gas station's glowing lights seems to come to life, emerging from the print's rich darkness and moving toward the viewer's slowly adjusting eyes. Through Dec. 9. (Meyerowitz, 580 Broadway. 625-3434. Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 11 to 6.)

"ALAN KLOTZ'S TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL HOLIDAY SALE OF NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHS"
Klotz, who was one of New York's first photography dealers, opens up his flat files every year around this time to sell pictures for "up to seventy per cent off," which means, as a gallery assistant explained, that they are priced from "a few hundred to a few thousand" dollars each. On the gift-budget spectrum, that's well above a yo-yo and well below a Picasso. Opens Dec. 1. (22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211.)

Short List

ANDREW BUSH
Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 627-2410.
Through Dec. 9.

LUCINDA DEVLIN
Rodgers, 529 W. 20th St. 414-9810.
Through Dec. 16.

INGE MORATH
Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051.
Through Dec. 9.

CINDY SHERMAN
Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St.
206-7100. Though Jan. 6.

EDWARD STEICHEN
Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223.
Through Dec. 30.

See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Whitney Museum.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
"Der Rosenkavalier," with Cheryl Studer, Susanne Mentzer, Elizabeth Norberg-Schulz, and Eric Halfvarson; Jiři Kout conducts. (Nov. 29 at 7:30.) ♦ With Peter Rose replacing Mr. Halfvarson. (Dec. 2 at 1.) ♦ **"La Bohème,"** with Nuccia Focile, Noëmi Nadelmann (in her Met début), Marcello Giordani, and Jean-Luc Chaignaud; Marco Armiliato. (Nov. 30, Dec. 2, and Dec. 5 at 8.) ♦ **"Der Fliegende Holländer,"** with Nina Stemme, Roland Wagenführer, James Morris, and Jan-Hendrik Rootering; Valery Gergiev. (Dec. 1 at 8 and Dec. 4 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

"WARRIOR SISTERS"
Fred Ho's feminist-socialist protest opera continues its run. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Nov. 29-Dec. 2 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
The Austrian conductor Franz Welser-Möst, thorough, if unexciting, in Germanic repertory, leads Schubert's Symphony No. 9 and Bach's Oboe d'Amore Concerto (with Thomas Stacy), and takes a walk on the wild side with John Adams's Chamber Symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Nov. 30 and Dec. 2 at 8 and Dec. 1 at 2.)

COLLEGIATE CHORALE AND ORCHESTRA
Robert Bass launches the Chorale's season with three works of Beethoven: the "Egmont" Overture, the Mass in C, and the "Choral Fantasy" (with the pianist Vladimir Feltsman). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 30 at 8.)

NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS
Clara Longstreth leads the chorus in works by Bach, Brahms, Schütz, Martin, and others. (Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Central Park W. at 65th St. 568-5948. Dec. 1 at 8 and Dec. 3 at 4.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY
The ensemble presents an all-Mozart concert, including the Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola (with Glenn Dicterow and Karen Dreyfus). (Baruch College, Mason Hall, Lexington Ave. at 23rd St. 799-1259. Dec. 1 at 8.) ♦ An all-Liszt program, including his evocative final tone poem, "From the Cradle to the Grave." (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 799-1259. Dec. 4 at 2 and 7 and Dec. 5 at 8.)

ORCHESTRA OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT
The violinist Thomas Zehetmair leads the period-instrument ensemble in an all-Vivaldi program. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. Dec. 3 at 2.)

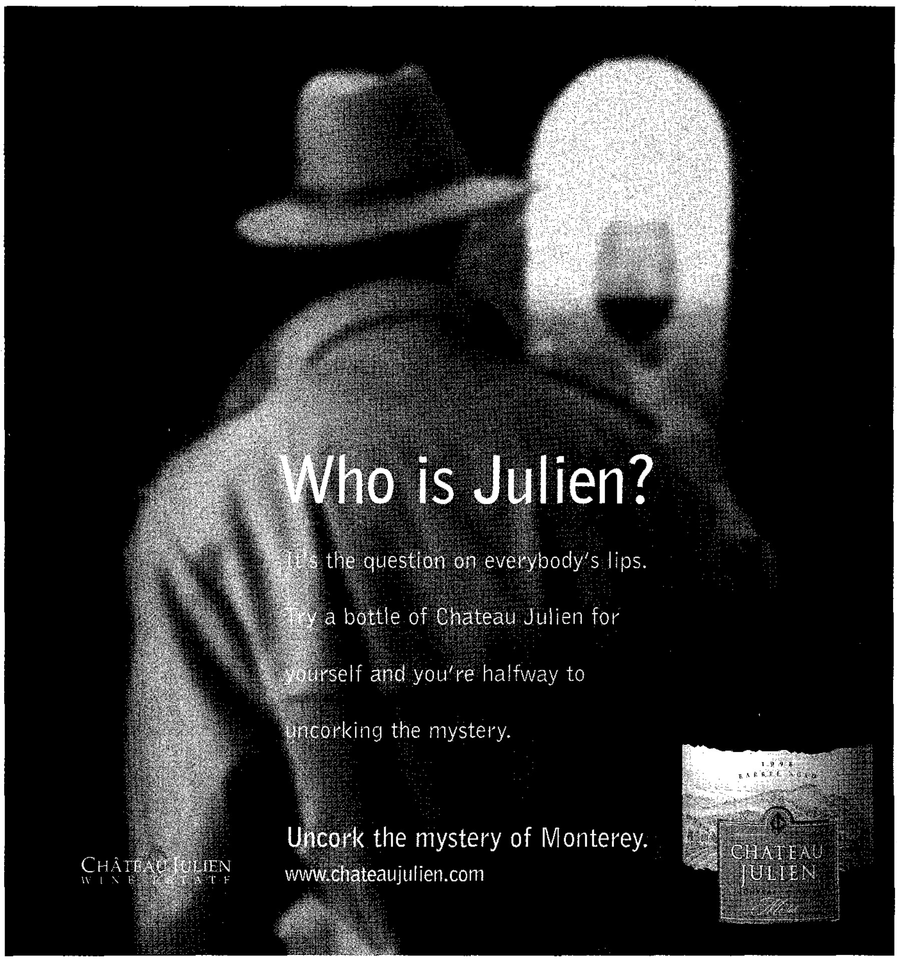
THE MET ORCHESTRA
Valery Gergiev takes a break from his operatic duties to conduct Shostakovich's Symphony No. 4 and Scriabin's "Prometheus: The Poem of Fire" (with pianist Alexander Toradze). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Dec. 3 at 3.)

LIONHEART
The six-man a-cappella group sings Italian Christmas music from the time of St. Francis of Assisi. (The Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 650-2290. Dec. 3 at 1 and 3.)

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
The conductorless ensemble offers a French program (Bizet, Fauré, Ibert, Ravel), with the flutist James Galway. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 4 at 8.)

RECITALS

EARL WILD / MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN
Two pianists who have proudly lived on the edges of the classical scene. Wild, a distinguished interpreter of the Romantics, celebrates his eighty-fifth birthday at Carnegie Hall, playing music by Liszt, Debussy, and others. (247-7800. Nov. 29 at 8.) ♦ Hamelin, the steel-fingered Canadian soloist, rev-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els in the new and unusual; his semiconservative Alice Tully Hall recital includes music by Medtner, Scriabin, and Schubert, and the Bach-Busoni Chaconne. (721-6500. Nov. 30 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
Nov. 30 and Dec. 2 at 7:30: The floating chamber-music series presents string quintets by Beethoven and Brahms (the First, in F Major). ♦ Dec. 1 at 7:30 and Dec. 3 at 4: More quintets, by Mozart and Brahms (the Second, in G Major). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Two works by Mozart (the Sonata for Two Pianos and the Quintet for Piano and Winds) frame music by two Americans, David Diamond and Lucia Dlugoszewski. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5778. Dec. 1 at 8 and Dec. 3 at 5.)

NADJA SALERNO-SONNENBERG AND ANNE-MARIE MC DERMOTT
In a program recalling the days of Jascha Heifetz and Samuel Dushkin, the violinist and the pianist perform works by Stravinsky (the Divertimento), Prokofiev, Brahms, and Gershwin. (92nd St. Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Dec. 2 at 8.)

MUSIC BY LEO ORNSTEIN AND GEORGE ANTHEIL
As part of Miller Theatre's "Piano Revolution" series, the pianist Sarah Cahill attacks several works by these two American mavericks—colorful and audacious things like "Suicide in an Airplane" and "The Ben Hecht Valses." The concert celebrates the late Antheil's centenary; Ornstein still thrives at a hundred and eight, and will listen to the concert via Webcast from his Wisconsin home. (Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Dec. 2 at 8.)

CHRISTA LUDWIG MASTER CLASSES
In an age of spotlight-grabbing divas, Christa Ludwig was a welcome relief: a mezzo-soprano of superb technical command whose connection to both music and text was natural and complete. The vocal music of Brahms and Mahler—in which she was coached by Leonard Bernstein—was a special part of her repertory, and she will share her wisdom with a new generation of singers in a series of public master classes at Carnegie Hall. A full-dress concert follows on Dec. 10. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Dec. 3-4 and Dec. 6-8 at 11 A.M. and 2. ♦ Note: A conversation between Ms. Ludwig and Ara Guzelimian, Carnegie's artistic adviser, will be held Dec. 5 at 7:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

ON THE AIR
Ira Glass and the producers of the radio show "This American Life" leave the confines of their soundproofed studios for two sessions of live tapings at Town Hall. The Chicago-based show packages big ideas about life, love, and the U. S. of A. into easily digestible themes—a formula that's worked for five years. Contributors Sarah Vowell, David Rakoff, and Russell Banks provide the words; the pop band OK GO provides the tunes; and the audience serves as ambient sound. (123 W. 43rd St. 307-4100. Dec. 10 at 2 and 6.)

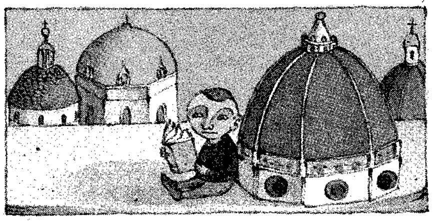
READINGS
Nov. 30 at 7: By Juana Ponce de León, an editor at Seven Stories Press, and members of the Coatlicue Theatre Company, from the newly published collection "Our Word Is Our Weapon: Selected Writings of Subcomandante Marcos." (El Taller Latino Americano, 2710 Broadway, at 104th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Dec. 4 at 8: The actors Dana Ivey, Barnard Hughes, and Helen Stenborg offer a dramatic reading of Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest." (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 642-0142.)

TALK
Nov. 30 at 6:30: New York *Times* Arts and Leisure editor John Rockwell interviews John Moran, the author of the play "Book of the Dead: Second Avenue." (For more information, see Theatre.) (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. No tickets necessary.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Building a Better World

In 1367, the citizens of Florence approved a design for a new cathedral which called for the largest dome ever built. But for more than fifty years no one could figure out how to make the structure stay up. Then Filippo Brunelleschi, a temperamental goldsmith with little architectural experience, tackled the problem. **BRUNELLESCHI'S DOME**, by Ross King (Walker), describes how the dome, which measures more than a hundred and forty-three feet in diameter, was so ambitious that Brunelleschi had to invent many of the machines that built it—ingenious hoists, a crane admired by Leonardo da Vinci, and a boat to transport marble. (It sank.)



SERGIO RUZZIER

Once up, the dome was recognized as a marvel of the age—"vast enough to cover the entire Tuscan population with its shadow," said a younger contemporary of Brunelleschi's, Leon Battista Alberti. Himself a prominent architect, Alberti achieved more lasting fame as the author of treatises on painting and architecture. Anthony Grafton's **LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI** (Hill & Wang) chronicles the life of this archetypal Renaissance man, who also somehow found time to make huge contributions to archeology and cryptography, to help plan the rebuilding of Rome, and, it seems, to write an anonymous biography of himself at the tender age of thirty-four.

In **THE BUILDING IN THE TEXT** (Penn State), Roy Eriksen remarks upon the importance of architecture in Alberti's writing—including the opening dialogue of "On the Tranquillity of the Soul," in which three speakers discuss the spiritual solace provided by churches as they walk around the Florentine cathedral. The climax of the conversation occurs directly under Brunelleschi's dome, a "nest of delights" just recently completed.

—*Leo Carey*

Books.
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Gift Ideas for Any Movie Buff

JAMES BOND: THE SECRET WORLD OF 007

by Alastair Dougall,
illustrated by Roger Stewart

Step into the life of the world's most dashing secret agent...Bond, James Bond. A complete dossier of photos and illustrations reveal the inner workings of 007's specially commissioned gadgets, top-secret paraphernalia and high-tech devices. (Dorling Kindersley)

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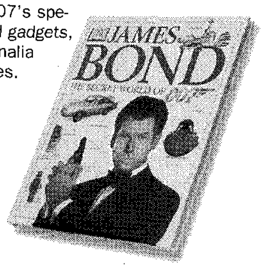

PEOPLE ALMANAC 2001

by the Editors of *People* Magazine

From the MTV Video Music Awards to celebrity weddings like Brad and Jennifer's, this ultimate sourcebook from the world's pop culture authority provides the lowdown on the year's headliners and head turners, bestsellers and chart toppers, scandals and success stories. (Time Incorporated)

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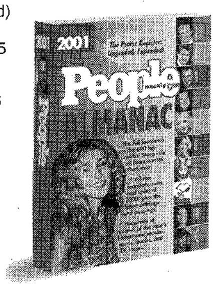

THE ART OF THE MATRIX

by Larry & Andy Wachowski

Going beyond the Academy Award-winning film itself, this large format preproduction archive includes artwork, conceptual drawings and the actual script of *The Matrix*. Created to showcase the massive planning that went into the phenomenal movie, this masterpiece's one thousand illustrations and photos are accompanied by artists' commentary. (Newmarket Press)

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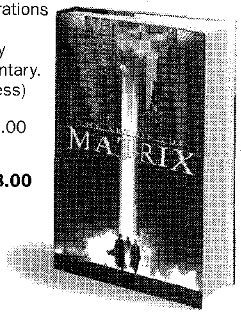

HOW THE GRINCH STOLE HOLLYWOOD

by Andrew Lipschultz

Director Ron Howard and Imagine Entertainment joined forces to make the feature movie adaptation of Dr. Seuss's *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* Find out how the classic story turned into sketches and storyboards, and how they in turn became the costumes, the wacky makeup, the production shots, and ultimately, one of the season's top films. (Random House)

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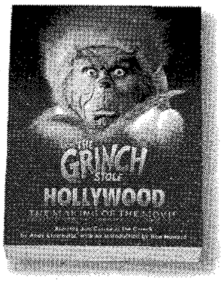

THE WIZARD OF OZ

by Jay Scarfone & William Stillman

Follow the yellow brick road to a stunning audio and three-dimensional collector's edition that brings Dorothy, Toto and the entire gang to life. Accompanied by an original soundtrack CD, over one hundred movie images are paper-engineered into favorite scenes including the twister, Munchkinland and the Emerald City. (Intervisual Books)

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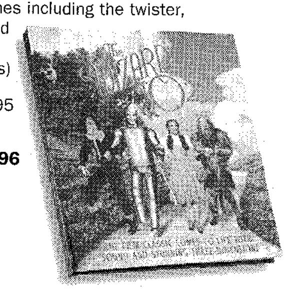

VIDEOHOUND'S DVD GUIDE

by Mike Mayo

How does the DVD release compare to the VHS? Is the screen resolution and sound quality any better? What extra features are included on the DVD release? The VideoHound answers all these questions as well as rates and reviews over 3000 films and the quality of the DVD release. (The Gale Group)

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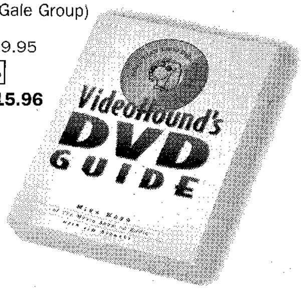

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MOVIES OPENING

A GOOD BABY
A drama directed by Katherine Dieckmann, in which a reclusive young man (Henry Thomas) finds a baby while hunting in the North Carolina woods. Opening Dec. 1. (Walter Reade Theatre.)

FILM NOTES

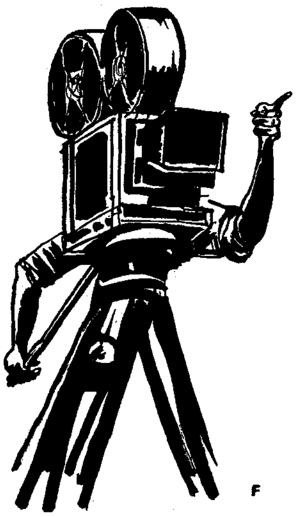
BEST IN SHOW
Christopher Guest reunites much of the cast of "Waiting for Guffman" for another mock documentary; the target this time around is the cloistered world of championship-dog breeding. Guest directs and scripts with a loose, improvisational style (no dialogue was written down), and while some of the scenes glide along with a quick-witted tempo, others are awkward. Best-in-group awards go to Parker Posey and Michael Hitchcock as an uptight suburban couple whose courtship involved adjacent Starbucks franchises, John Michael Higgins as a preening owner who outshines his shih tzu, and Fred Willard as a chipper commentator who showers asinine comments on the proceedings. If Guest has a trademark style, it's the airtight earnestness he demands of his cast—there's not one wink in the entire film.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and 72nd Street East.)

BILLY ELLIOT
The British director Stephen Daldry has previously concentrated on theatre; now, as if to prove that he's a man for all art forms, he's made a film about ballet. Billy Elliot (Jamie Bell) is a slim, pugnacious boy who doesn't enjoy his boxing lessons but casts a jealous glance at the dance class that rehearses nearby. He joins in, prospers, gets some private tuition from his careworn teacher (Julie Walters), and ends up auditioning for the Royal Ballet. Will he make it? Can you guess? Although the film is set during the miners' strike of 1984 (the most grievous strife in Britain's recent history), it slowly sheds its anger and abrasive comedy in favor of something softer. The best thing on view is Bell, whose ratty, unsentimental demeanor just about sees the story through.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 10/30/00.) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema I, and Lincoln Square.)

BOUNCE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Gotham Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

LA BÛCHE
Paris at Christmas, the time of torture: a family whose members don't much like one another plans to gather for a celebratory dinner. As they meet in pairs and trios, we discover crosscurrents of relationships and betrayals, and the movie becomes an intricate puzzle that comes together in the viewer's head. Danièle Thompson wrote the movie with her son Christopher Thompson, and also directed. Her work, at times, has a startling candor, as well as the typical French virtue of companionability. The attractive cast includes Claude Rich and Françoise Fabian as the divorced father and mother, and Sabine Azéma, Emmanuelle Béart, and Charlotte Gainsbourg as the daughters. The French economy may be faltering, but from the evidence of this movie the country's fascination with adultery has only increased. In French.—*David Denby* (Paris.)

CHARLIE'S ANGELS
It's the usual story: hitch a couple of electrodes to an old TV show, flick the switch, and hope that it comes surging back to life. This latest effort can't be faulted for energy, but, in most other respects, it barely gives a twitch. The Angels are played by Lucy Liu, Drew Barrymore, and, most engagingly, Cameron Diaz; they are still controlled by the mysteriously dull Charlie, whose representative on earth is the waggish Bosley (an underused Bill Murray). The plot entails satellites, cell phones, and a threat to "world privacy"—not, one might suppose, a profound cause of anxiety for our flamboyant heroines. The director is someone, or something, called McG, and he, or it, seems content to bundle one high-kicking, high-volume scene on top of the next. You can't hear yourself think, which is probably a good thing.—*A.L.* (11/13/00) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)



THE CONTENDER
Vigorously unsubtle political entertainment. The Democratic President, Jackson Evans (Jeff Bridges), a wily, dominating fellow who may not be good at heart, nominates a woman, Senator Laine Hanson (Joan Allen), to be his Vice-President after the sitting Vice-President dies. A Republican congressman, Shelly Runyon (Gary Oldman), wants to block her. His weapon: some photographs of her participation, as a college freshman, in a frat-house orgy. When the Senator stands on her dignity, refusing to answer Runyon's questions, the movie becomes an attack on double standards—a noble conception but also a needlessly solemn one. The picture is juicily well acted, however, particularly by Oldman. Written and directed by Rod Lurie, who uses Washington unimaginatively, like a TV-movie director.—*D.D.* (10/16 & 10/23/00) (Beekman, Empire 25, and Union Square.)

DANCER IN THE DARK
The new Lars Von Trier film makes his previous efforts seem like models of orthodoxy and restraint. Shot in Sweden, it's set in an America of Von Trier's own devising. Most of the characters speak with foreign accents, and the heroine—a timid, bespectacled factory worker and single mother named Selma—is played by Björk, the Icelandic pop munchkin. Selma has a congenital eye disease, and she is saving up to pay for an operation for her young son, who will otherwise follow her into blindness. The film is unashamedly two-toned, split between a granular authenticity and a stylized gaudiness. The musical scenes—in the factory, on a railroad track—have a deliberate, stamping awkwardness, overlaid with Björk's animal wailing. Many viewers have refused to stomach this unhealthy mixture, yet it feels laced with surprising power, and the harshness of the dénouement is unfeigned.—*A.L.* (9/25/00) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, State, and Union Square.)

GEORGE WASHINGTON
David Gordon Green's languid, painterly film about a group of African-American kids growing up in rural North Carolina has all the deliberate, poetic rambling of a Terrence Malick picture. Its "Days of Heaven"-like voice-over, spoken by the thirteen-year-old actress Candace Evanofski, gives the film a haunting, ethereal structure that's far removed from the gritty narratives typically found in stories of poverty and desperation. The script is both evocative and richly detailed, and when the film turns unexpectedly violent the difficulty of bearing truthful witness to the actions of others is movingly, and convincingly, portrayed.—*Bruce Diones* (The Screening Room.)

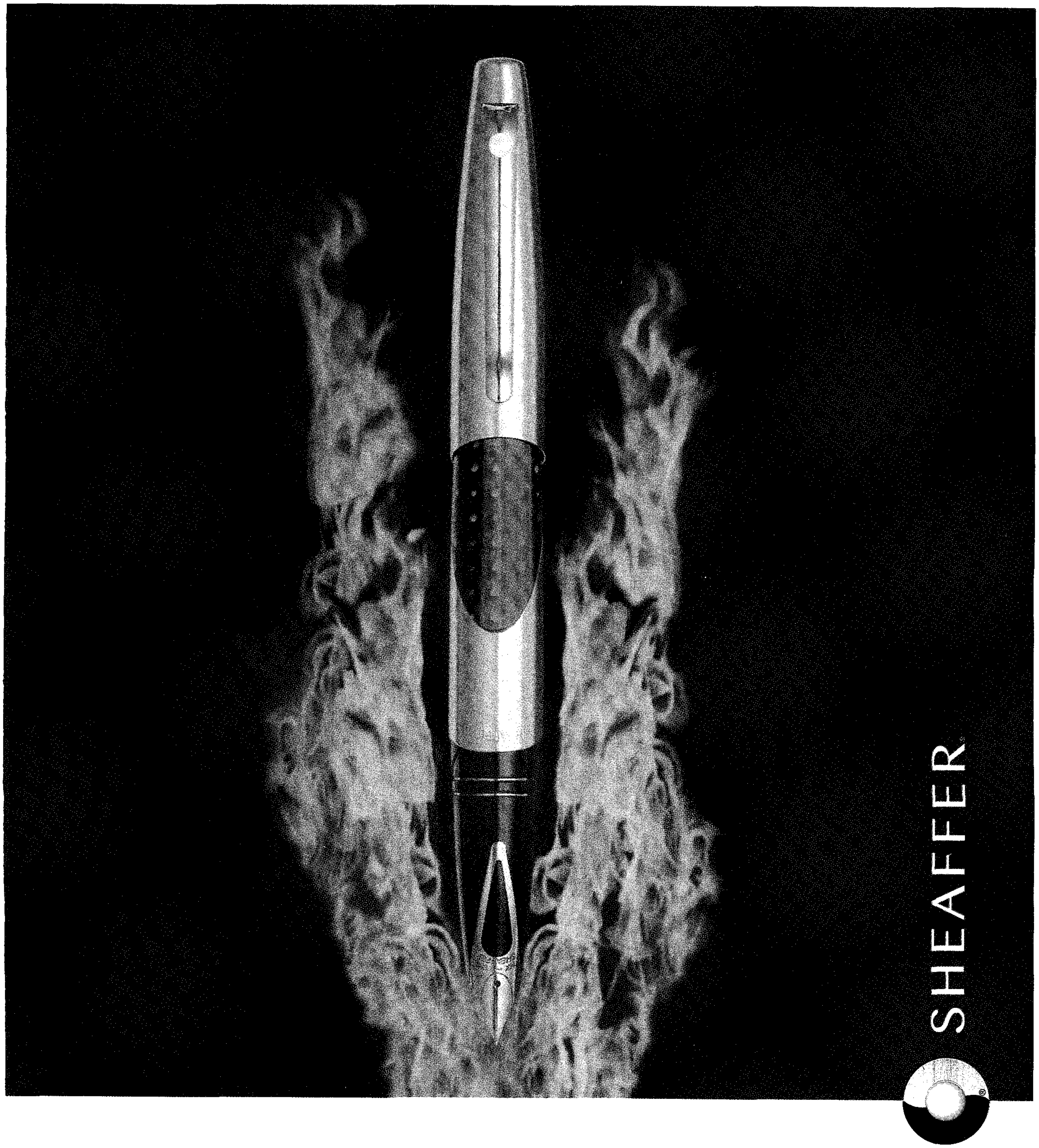
THE GRINCH
A bold, not to say foolhardy, attempt to film Dr. Seuss. Jim Carrey plays the Grinch, a crabby, green-faced sluggard who lives at the top of Mt. Crumpit. He is consumed with loathing for the Whos, the cute race that lives in the valley below, and you can see his point: some of them are so doggedly joyous that they ought, at the very least, to be locked up. The director is Ron Howard, in a whimsical vein; the news that the Grinch is not really mean but simply misunderstood is no surprise, but it still spells doom for the movie. The screen is so crammed with candy-colored detail that you come out feeling slightly sick; children with a sweet tooth may succumb. With Jeffrey Tambor and, hunting hard for laughs, Christine Baranski.—*A.L.* (11/27/00) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT
A satiric celebration of anarchic youth and the blast of oxygen they give a wheezing kingdom. The director, Richard Lester, and the screenwriter, Alun Owen, set out, in 1964, to show how the Beatles' phenomenal fame encased them in a cocoon. But the Fab Four aren't larvae—they're brilliant butterflies, and they have an unsurpassed rapport with their fans, whether in the streets of London or in a movie theatre. Lester directs fearlessly, shooting them every which way to capture their antic verve. The nonchalant iconoclast John Lennon "snorts" a Coke bottle; Paul McCartney, in a bowler hat and fake beard, clowns like an aristocratic elf. Ringo Starr becomes the group's hangdog mascot, George Harrison its pocket of moodiness. Wilfrid Brambell provides delightful counterpoint as Paul's grandfather, a "clean old man." Lester devised strategies for making visual poetry out of rock which music-video directors have been stealing for decades. In one of the most glorious musical numbers in movie history, the Beatles break out of their keepers' care and zigzag through a field to the tune of "Can't Buy Me Love."—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum.)

INTIMATE LIGHTING
A folk comedy about a young cellist with the Prague symphony who takes his big-city girlfriend with him when he goes to visit a friend from his days at the conservatory. The musician from Prague is to be the soloist at a concert of the small-town orchestra that the friend now conducts. The director, Ivan Passer, is witty in tiny, match-flare-size details; he shows us lives that have become a negotiation of minor irritants. Day-to-day existence in the town is like a prolonged silent-movie comedy. You find yourself doing small double takes as you watch this movie. It builds to a freeze-frame closing gag that's so funny and so completely dotty that you're not likely to forget it. In Czech.—*Pauline Kael* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Dec. 2.)

THE LEGEND OF BAGGER VANCE
Robert Redford, directing in pastoral-elegy mode: the light is golden, the colors are blended, and drama is nowhere to be found. He's made a tall tale about golf in the early thirties, with Matt Damon as a Savannah athlete demoralized by the First World War and Will Smith as an angelic black caddie who emerges from the gloaming and restores Damon by whispering incomprehensible remarks in his ear about feeling his way to an "authentic stroke." With Charlize Theron around, Damon shouldn't have any trouble restoring himself through love, but the movie is too dreamy and silly for sex.—*D.D.* (11/6/00) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

ME & ISAAC NEWTON
Michael Apted's subtly rewarding documentary about seven remarkable scientists, who talk about their beginnings and their myriad discoveries. The group includes a chemist, two physicists, a cognitive scientist, a computer scientist, a cancer re-



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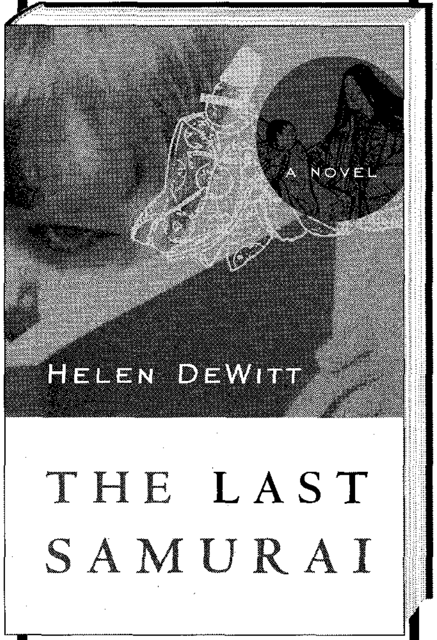

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searcher, and a primatologist, and their warm, accessible manners make their accomplishments seem all the more inspiring. Apted travels to his subjects’ natural surroundings, catching them at home, in a rain forest, or in an impoverished village, and then lets the camera do the work of discovering their motivations. He’s an unobtrusive director (a skill he honed while working on his acclaimed “7-Up” series), and his eclectic intelligence brings out the boundless curiosity that drives these intrepid thinkers.—*B.D.* (Cinema Village.)

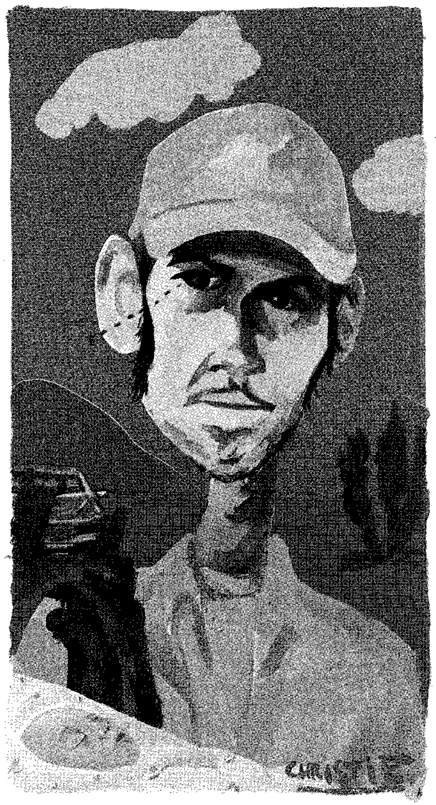
MEET THE PARENTS
Jay Roach moves on from the campy delights of the Austin Powers series to direct this smoothly acted comedy of errors. Ben Stiller plays a modern man charged with a Victorian task: asking his girlfriend’s father for permission to marry his daughter. With a calamitous surname (“pronounced just like it’s spelled, F-O-C-K-E-R”) and a faintly hilarious profession (male nurse), Stiller seems like a sitting duck for the secretive, overprotective father, played by Robert De Niro. Stiller grovels, De Niro growls, and the girls (Blythe Danner and Teri Polo) watch from the sidelines. This is dumbed-up comedy: there are just enough unexpected moments to redeem all the easy pleasures of the slapstick.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

MEN OF HONOR
Robert De Niro’s bizarre performance as a choleric Navy diver—spasmodic body movement and an out-of-the-swamp Southern accent—is the only real life in this exceptionally square military biography. An earnest Cuba Gooding, Jr., plays the real-life hero Carl Brashear, who overcame racist hazing to become the Navy’s first black master diver in the nineteen-fifties. De Niro is the instructor who initially tries to discourage Brashear and then becomes his champion. Familiar as it may be, the story has stirring moments, although the screenwriter, Scott Marshall Smith, and the director, George Tillman, Jr., do their best to kill them. Each scene shows the hero facing some Challenge, which he sternly Confronts and then Overcomes.—*D.D.* (11/20/00) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, 62nd & Broadway, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER
A skillful, unnerving documentary that re-creates the massacre of eleven Israeli athletes by Palestinian terrorists at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Even today, the ironies are painful to contemplate. The Germans, eager to dispel remaining doubts about the peaceable character of the “New Germany,” kept security guards away from the Olympic Village and tried to persuade the Palestinians that the killing of Jews on German soil should not happen again. Later, at an airport near Munich, the local police performed with an ineptitude almost hard to believe. The movie, narrated by Michael Douglas, consists of period television footage, a few staged episodes, and interviews with participants, including the sole surviving terrorist and some very sheepish German officials. The massacre is not given sufficient historical context, but as a moment-by-moment report of a horrifying event the movie is both instructive and deeply upsetting. Directed by Kevin Macdonald. Produced by Arthur Cohn.—*D.D.* (Film Forum.)

PAY IT FORWARD
An embarrassingly ham-handed fable about doing good deeds, but worth seeing for Helen Hunt’s first-rate performance as an alcoholic Las Vegas cocktail waitress and single mother—a woman with lousy judgment who wants to do the right thing but doesn’t know how. As a classroom exercise, her son Trevor (Haley Joel Osment) devises the scheme of “pay it forward”—performing a gratuitous act of kindness for three people and then insisting that they do the same for three others. Trevor helps strangers, but, playing Cupid, he’s more eager to help his mother meet his teacher (Kevin Spacey). It’s a rum role for Spacey, who sacrifices his aura of malevolence by delivering an unconvincing, weepy confession fit for a TV movie. Written by Leslie Dixon, from Catherine Ryan Hyde’s novel, and directed by Mimi Leder.—*D.D.* (11/6/00) (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, Village East Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

QUILLS
Philip Kaufman turns eagerly back to sex, a topic that he has merely brushed against in the years since “Henry and June.” Geoffrey Rush plays the Marquis de Sade, imprisoned in a lunatic asylum but determined to continue writing—and, if possible, publishing—his scurrilous works. He is befriended and, for a while, tolerated by the Abbé Coulmier (Joaquin Phoenix), the priest in charge; the regime darkens with the arrival of Dr. Royer-Collard (Michael Caine), who is under orders to block de Sade’s creative juices. Add the ripe presence of a willing laundress (Kate Winslet), who smuggles out the manuscripts, and the stage is set: what for, it is never quite clear. The movie declines into a drab, cloistered hymn to freedom of speech, and Kaufman’s directing of period frenzy is surprisingly lumpen; rising above it is Rush, alternately cooing and blustery, and almost certainly preferable to the real Marquis. Look out for the scene where he writes his elegant filth on the clothes he is wearing. With any luck, this will start a trend.—*A.L.* (11/27/00) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)



Henry Thomas in “A Good Baby.”

RED PLANET
So much for space as the final frontier. In the second voyage to Mars launched by Hollywood this year, Val Kilmer and an indistinguishable cast of others wander around the deserts of Jordan—sorry, Mars—in an attempt to walk off a nasty case of déjà vu. Less witty than “Mission to Mars,” the film leans heavily on space-movie clichés, but, happily, the token crew member who pontificates about the space-time continuum gets knocked off first.—*M.A.* (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

REQUIEM FOR A DREAM
Darren Aronofsky’s new film stars Ellen Burstyn as Sara Goldfarb, a Brighton Beach widow who

GREGORY CHRISTIE

launches herself on a crash diet—a path that will lead to pill addiction and electroshock therapy. Meanwhile, her son Harry (Jared Leto) and his girlfriend, Marion (Jennifer Connelly), yield to the pull of hard drugs. Aronofsky divides them by split screen, and punches home their addictions with a blistering montage of pills, puffs, and dilating eyes. All this is managed with formidable skill, but it shuts the movie down, and the various junkies—even Burstyn, who gives the role everything she's got—end up looking less substantial than their respective poisons.—*A.L.* (10/9/00) (Union Square.)

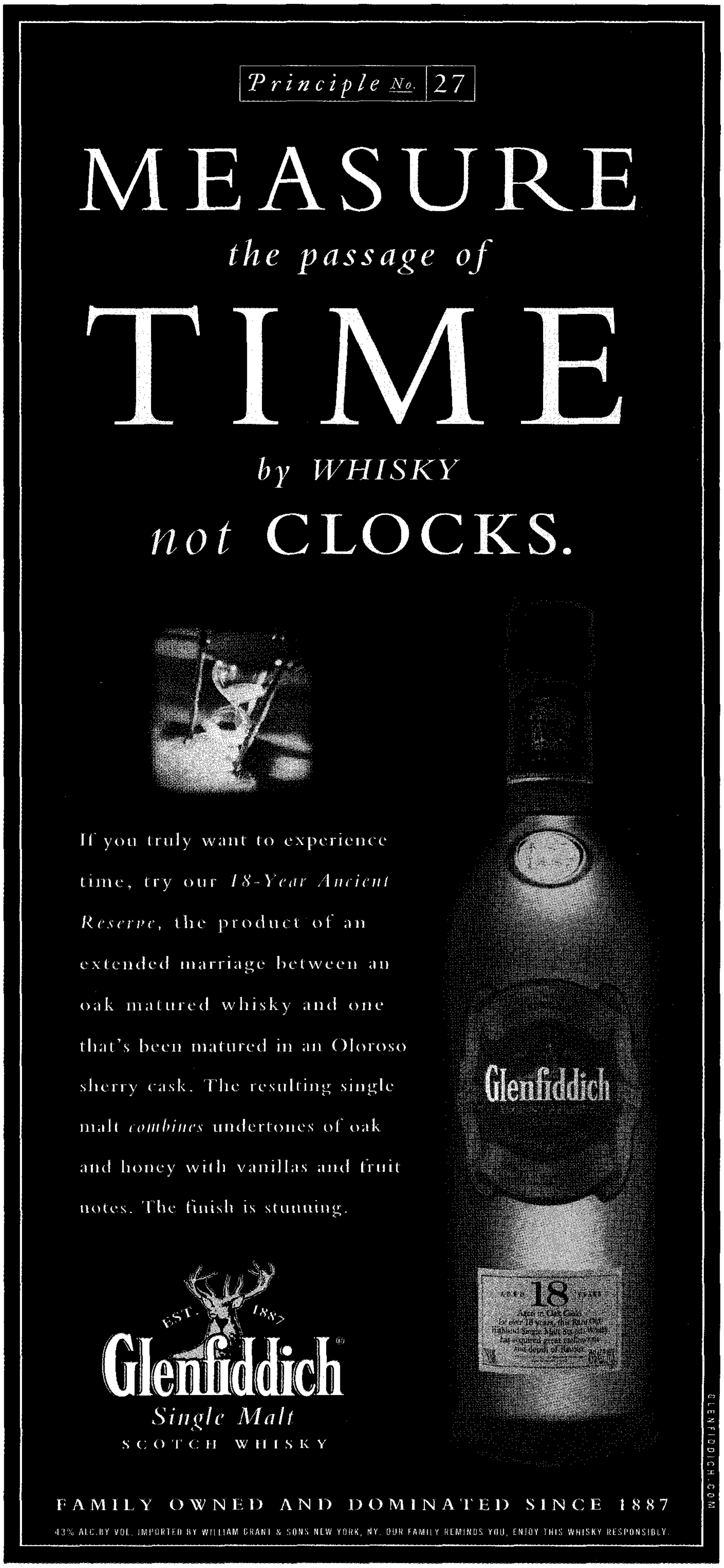
THE 6TH DAY
Arnold Schwarzenegger gets cloned by a criminal corporation headed by a svelte entrepreneur (Tony Goldwyn) who wears silver-gray clothes and fashionable tiny glasses. The main interest of this science-fiction thriller is the design of its near-future setting—close enough to us that the technology is no more than an eerie extension of current manias. There is a virtual girlfriend who offers sex the minute her partner comes home and a doll, in the form of a complaining little girl, who is disturbingly human. The point seems to be that technology is erasing the difference between the human and the nonhuman and no one much cares. The writers, Cormac and Marianne Wibberly, and the director, Roger Spottiswoode, should have trusted this provocative idea and gone further with it. Instead, the film falls back on conventional elements: car chases, shoot-outs, and the like.—*D.D.* (11/20/00) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, and Union Square.)

UNBREAKABLE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, Union Square, and Waverly.)

VENUS BEAUTY INSTITUTE
A melancholy portrait of a perversely lonely Parisian single woman (Nathalie Baye) who picks up men at will but revolts when a raffishly handsome sculptor (Samuel Le Bihan) falls in love with her. Filmed in the luscious, synthetic blue-and-pink hues of the beauty parlor in which the heroine works, the picture offers a nonjudgmental view of women's obsessions and of sexual temperaments in all their variety. Unfortunately, it loses drive and focus near the end and slips away—it's half of a very good movie. Bulle Ogier plays the proprietor of the beauty shop; Tonie Marshall wrote and directed.—*D.D.* (59th Street East Cinema and Quad Cinema.)

THE YARDS
A lowering, heavy-browed thriller from the director James Gray, who made a name for himself with "Little Odessa." In many ways, this is more of the same: a tight and sometimes tortured community, the sober settling of scores, and what feels like an official rationing of daylight. Mark Wahlberg plays Leo, who's trying to go straight; he takes a job as sidekick to his old friend Willie (Joaquin Phoenix), who fixes contracts for the New York subway system. Things go well, then badly, then worse still, until Leo is dwelling in subterranean solitude—Gray's kind of place. The supporting cast is tough and tested: Faye Dunaway, Ellen Burstyn, and especially James Caan, who plays Leo's uncle by marriage. The film may be humorless, unflustered by the need to quicken or amuse, but it feels unfashionably true to itself. Gray has reconstructed a world that he knows, and conjured a mood that no one else would have the nerve to maintain.—*A.L.* (10/30/00) (Angelika Film Center.)

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME
The first-rate actress Laura Linney—bland on the surface but with angry impulses churning underneath—gives a detailed and involving performance as a single working mother in a small and somewhat boring upstate New York town. When her screwup of a kid brother (Mark Ruffalo) returns from Alaska, she's torn between tossing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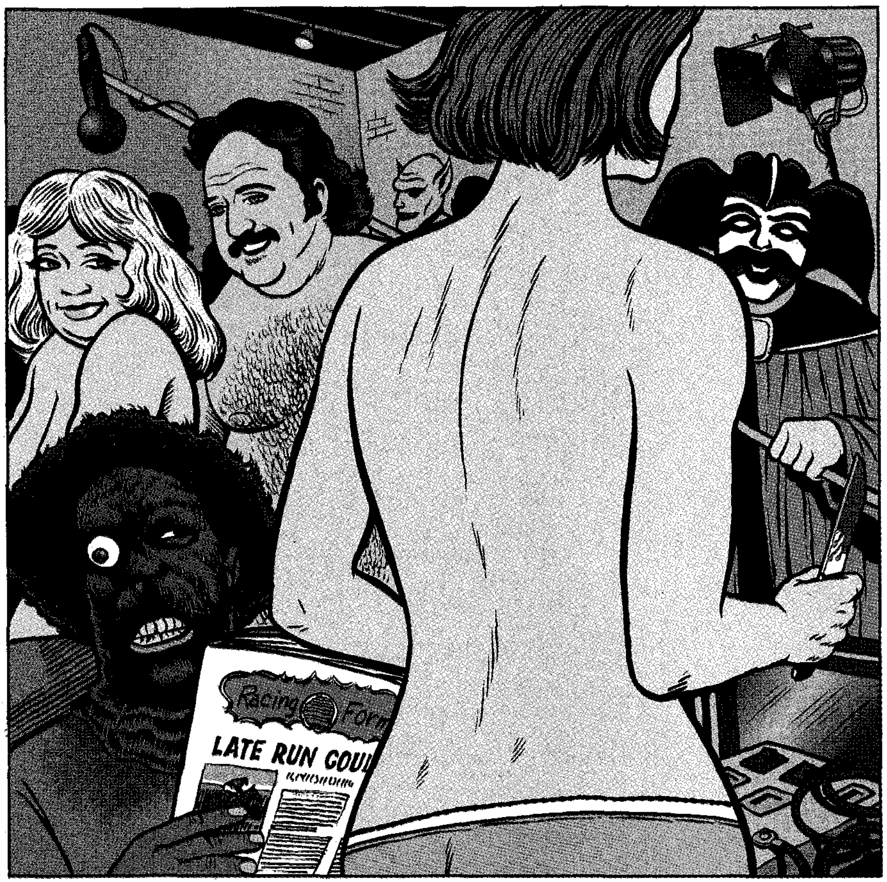
him out and letting him stay on and become a companion to her fatherless son (Rory Culkin). The movie was written and directed by the playwright and screenwriter Kenneth Lonergan, who pays close attention to the way so many of us are divided between good and bad impulses—including bad impulses we desperately need to act on if we're not going to feel half-dead. Lonergan's work is quiet but intense, and Ruffalo—dark and sensual and agonizingly confused—gives a heartbreaking performance. With Matthew Broderick and Jon Tenney as Linney's suitors.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)



Cult favorite Lloyd Kaufman and Troma Entertainment celebrate twenty-five years of simulated blood and erotic gags with a retrospective at Anthology Film Archives.

MARK ZINGARELLI

ALSO PLAYING

ALMOST FAMOUS (9/18/00)
East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, and Village East Cinemas.
BAMBOOZLED (10/9/00)
Empire 25 and Village East Cinemas.
CALLE 54
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
KIPPUR
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.
LITTLE NICKY
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.
SING-ALONG SOUND OF MUSIC
Waverly 1 and 2.
A TIME FOR DRUNKEN HORSES
Cinema Village, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and State.
THE TRENCH
Film Forum.
WONDER BOYS
Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

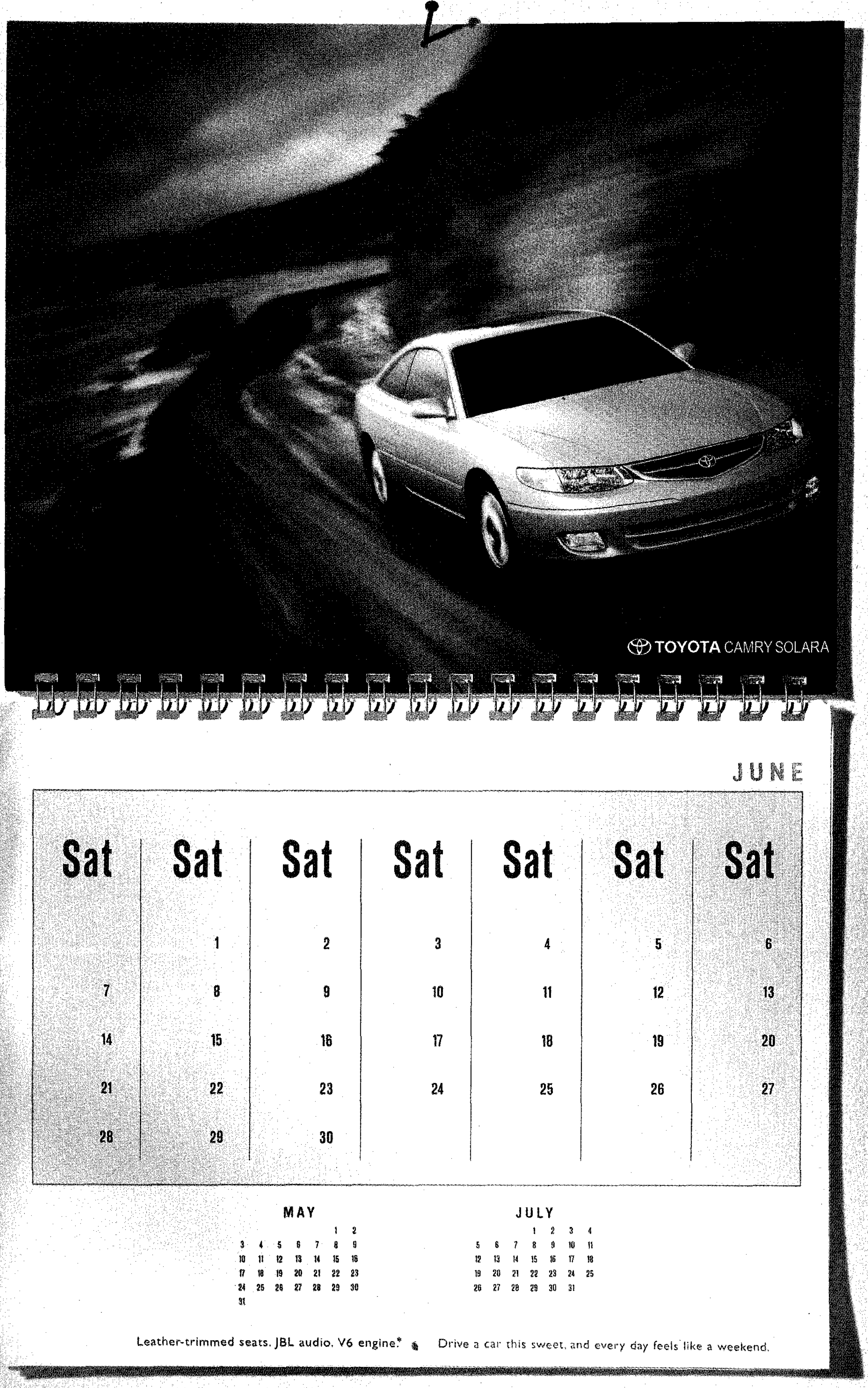
Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Dec. 3: "Visions of New York: Films from the 1960's Underground." Dec. 2 at 2: "The Chelsea Girls" (1966, Andy Warhol). ♦ Dec. 3 at 2: "Andy Warhol and the Exploding Plastic Inevitable," selections from the artist's multimedia experiments. ♦ Dec. 3 at 5:30: "Outer and Inner Space" (1965, Warhol). ♦ Classic movies. Dec. 2-3 at 6:30: "Ugetsu" (1953, Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese).
ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Dec. 1-9: A twenty-fifth-anniversary retrospective of the work of Lloyd Kaufman and Troma Entertainment. Dec. 1 at 7: "The Toxic Avenger" (1984, Michael Herz and Kaufman). ♦ Dec. 1 and Dec. 3 at 9 and Dec. 2, 4, and 5 at 7: "Terror Firmer" (1999, Kaufman). ♦ Dec. 1 at 11:30: "Cannibal! The Musical" (1996, Trey Parker). ♦ Dec. 2 at 3: "Squeeze Play!" (1979, Kaufman). ♦ Dec. 2 at 5: "Waitress!" (1981, Herz and Kaufman). ♦ Dec. 2 at 9:30: "Vegas in Space" (1991, Phillip R. Ford). ♦ Dec. 2 at 11:30: "Bloodsucking Freaks" (1975, Joel M. Reed). ♦ Dec. 3 at 3: "The First Turn-On!!" (1983, Herz and Kaufman). ♦ Dec. 3 at 5: "Stuck on You" (1982, Herz and Kaufman). ♦ Dec. 3 at 7: "Screamplay" (1986, Rufus Butler Seder). ♦ Dec. 4 at 9:30: "Class of Nuke 'Em High" (1986, Richard W. Haines and Kaufman). ♦ Dec. 5 at 9:30: "Troma's War" (1997, Herz and Kaufman).
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Nov. 29 at 7:30: "Forbidden Paradise" (1924, Ernst Lubitsch). ♦ Nov. 30 at 6:50 and 9:30: "Long Live the Republic" (1965, Karel Kachyna; in Czech). ♦ Dec. 1 at 4:30, 6:30, and 9:30: "All My Good Countrymen" (1968, Vojtech Jasny; in Czech). ♦ Dec. 2 at 2 and 6:50: "Intimate Lighting" (†). ♦ Dec. 2 at 4 and 9:10: "End of a Priest" (1968, Evald Schorm; in Czech). ♦ Dec. 3 at 2 and 7: "The Joke" (1969, Jaromil Jires; in Czech). ♦ Dec. 3 at 4 and 9:10: "Black Peter" (1963, Milos Forman; in Czech). ♦ Dec. 4 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "My American Uncle" (1980, Alain Resnais; in French). ♦ Dec. 5 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Beresina" (1999, Daniel Schmid; in German).
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Dec. 1-21 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "A Hard Day's Night" (†).
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Nov. 30 at 6: Restored prints of "The Cook" (1918, Fatty Arbuckle) and "East Side, West Side" (1927, Allan Dwan). ♦ Through Jan. 2: A Luis Buñuel centennial retrospective. Dec. 1 at 2:30 and Dec. 3 at 5: "The Beast with Five Fingers" (1946, Robert Florey). ♦ Dec. 1 at 6 and Dec. 5 at 2:30: "Gran Casino" (1946, Buñuel; in Spanish). ♦ Dec. 1 at 8 and Dec. 3 at 2: "Buñuel, Nazi Propaganda, and MOMA," a presentation of propaganda films edited by the director. ♦ Dec. 2 at 2 and Dec. 4 at 2:30: "The Great Madcap" (1949, Buñuel).



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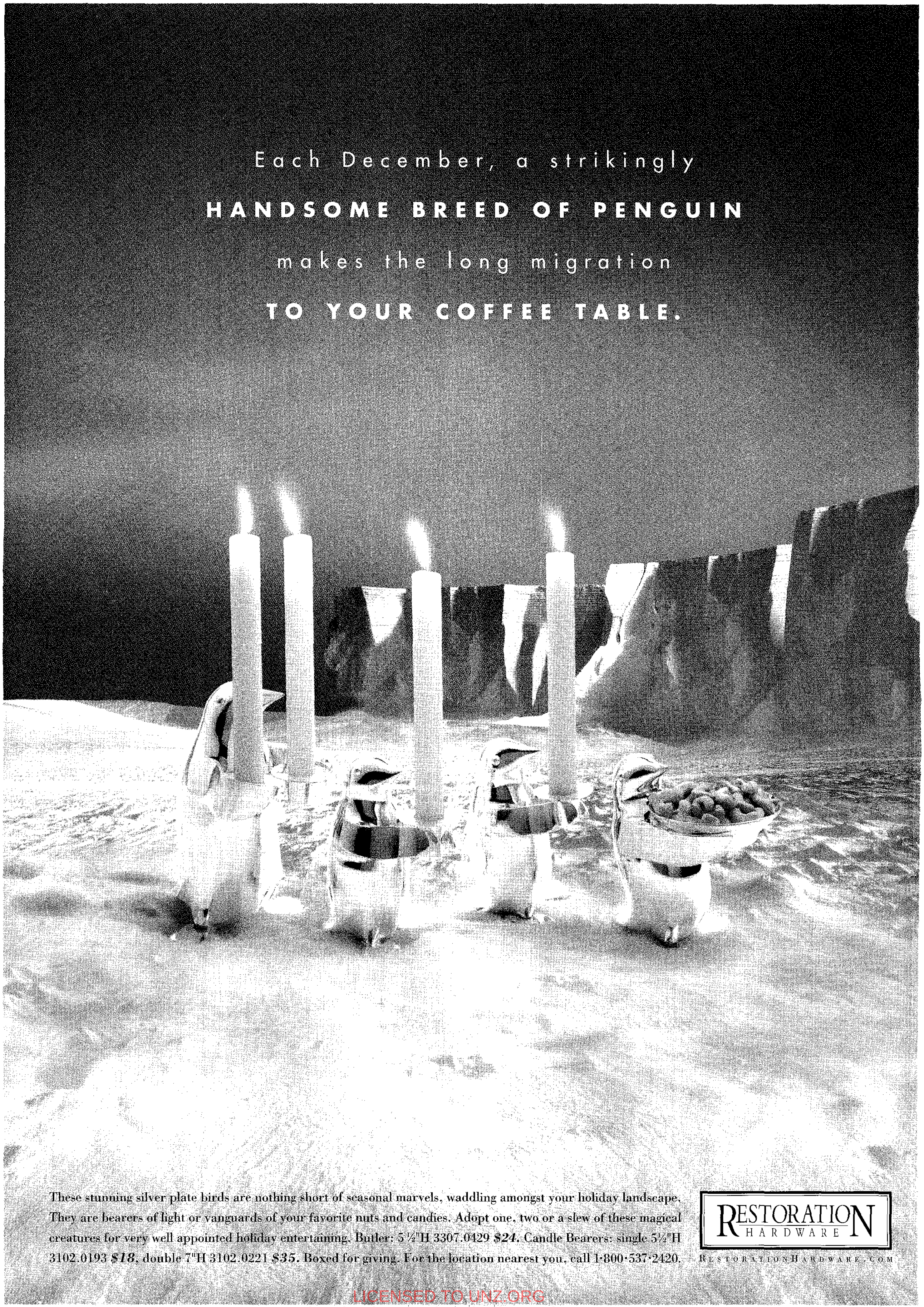
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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

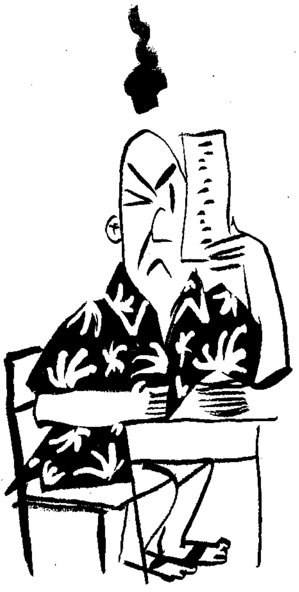
All through the long holiday weekend, we staggered from the table to the television—the great domestic pilgrimage—and sat before the dispiriting frieze of Floridian ballot feelers doing their duty. Like diamond cutters, they narrowed their eyes to slits and tried to see a world in a dimpled chad.

What a mess. But it's not as if we were without warning. "The ballots made no result," Boss Tweed once said. "The counters made the result." (Now it's the courts.) Even in precincts less suspect than Tammany Hall, the mechanics of democracy have come under question. In 1985, David Burnham, of the *Times*, wrote a fine series on the possibilities of fraud and error in the American voting systems, and in 1988 this magazine published Ronnie Dugger's comprehensive account of the same subject, "Counting Votes." At one point in Dugger's piece, Willis Ware, a computer specialist at the Rand Corporation, is quoted as saying, "There is probably a Chernobyl or a Three Mile Island waiting to happen in some election, just as a Richter 8 earthquake is waiting to happen in California."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

It turns out that Florida, scene of hurricanes, is the earthquake zone. We go to press knowing that two counties, Broward and Palm Beach, are recounting their ballots with a very slow accretion of votes favoring Gore, and that the Supreme Court will hear arguments later this week on whether those recounts are, in fact, legit. There is talk of Electoral College manipulations, and high drama in the House of Representatives ahead. Levels of suspicion are so high and tempers are so inflamed that this national melodrama has taken on the cartoonish outlines of pulp political thrillers like "Seven Days in May."

And yet perhaps we ought to take a great big cleansing breath. At the risk of betraying the Union of Pundits, we ought to consider the proposition that this is less a national tragedy than it is a freak of math. As John Allen Paulos, a professor of mathematics at Temple University, puts it, "The margin of error in this election is far greater than the margin of victory, no matter who wins." The Florida balloting is a virtual tie; just one vote per seven thousand prevents it from being a fifty-fifty split. Even if there were a statewide recount (and there will not be), ballot counters would have to make less than one mistake per seven thousand votes to insure absolute accuracy; if we know anything by now, it's that, with the current technology, such accuracy is impossible.



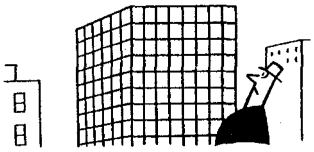
The candidates have not done themselves particularly proud in the days since November 7th: Gore's sanctimonious remarks that the count is ultimately about "our democracy" are as sincere as his statements months ago calling on Washington to give Elián González permanent residency in the United States. Bush—who, after all, appears to have lost the popular vote—has been even more cynical. His princely detachment, his surly insistence that he is already President, his hiring of all the familiar family retainers are not pleasant harbingers.

No matter who is "certified" in Florida, there will never be a clean electoral winner, and it requires a superhuman maturity (and A's in math) to realize that sometimes there is no discernible "will of the people." If Gore loses, he will go to bed every night thinking about how officials threw out more than sixteen thousand ballots from predominantly Democratic areas in Duval County either because they weren't punched at all or because they were "double punched" by people who, most likely, voted for him on the first page of their ballot and, by mistake, chose a minor candidate on the second; he will think about the presumably errant votes for Pat Buchanan in Palm Beach County and about the men and women of Miami-Dade who, for some reason, just threw up their hands last week and walked away from their chad-reading duties. Bush, one imagines, is a less haunted soul than Gore and less inclined to nightmares, but if he loses he may think of the votes that he might have won in the Panhandle if the networks had not declared Gore the winner in Florida ten minutes before the polls closed there.

In baseball, a tie goes to the runner. A tie in an election is more complicated: it is an invitation to disaster. The least we can do is to adopt a voting mechanism nationwide that is less mysterious than, say, the common butterfly. When you are about to complete an order on Amazon.com or on Barnes & Noble's Web site, you are asked, in essence, Are you really sure you want this book? Our voting machines should ask a similar question. Of course, we may not want to think long on the answer. Not this year, anyway.

—*David Remnick*

COMEBACKS
THE ARCHITECT OF SWANKY POPULISM



There are not a lot of architects who see their work received as the hot new thing, then watch it go out of fashion and come back into fashion again, but if you are still going strong at ninety-eight such things happen. Morris Lapidus was the toast of Miami Beach in the nineteen-fifties for the glitzy style he more or less invented with the Fontainebleau Hotel, a building that is to architecture what the 1959 Cadillac is to cars—swooping, wildly extravagant, full of self-indulgent glitter and pomp. Like the Cadillac, the Fontainebleau has a higher approval rating among serious design types today than it did when it was new. In the fifties, when prominent architects tended to see their calling as a matter of convincing people that they really *wanted* to live in glass boxes, Lapidus's joyful excesses made him something of a pariah. When his first hotel in New York, the curving Summit, on Lexington Avenue, was finished in 1961, there were a lot of jokes about its being too far from the beach.

Lapidus's reputation has been undergoing a gradual process of rehabilitation for the past twenty years or so, and the other week he flew to New York from Miami to receive a National Design Award from the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. Lapidus was honored, along with several designers and two other architects, the late John Hedjuk and Frank Gehry. You might not expect that Lapidus, who has always presented himself as a kind of architectural populist, would have much in common with Gehry, who is a darling of the critics. But Lapidus loves Gehry, and he views the younger architect's success as a vindication of his own maligned vision.

"I love Gehry's architecture," Lapidus said on the morning of the awards dinner. "The world is beginning to come around. Architects are starting to do what I did—they bend, they shoot around angles. They're using sweeping curves, moving lines, color, light. I'm not trying to restore Renaissance or Greek or Roman architecture—there is an architecture that is right for the twenty-first century. Thank God the International Style is dead."

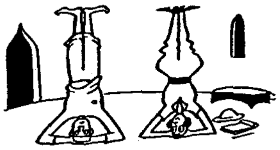
Lapidus was sitting in a wheelchair, which he uses to conserve his energy, and he was accompanied by Deborah Desilets, an architect in her forties who has been his companion since she gave him a ride home six years ago. "I asked him what the most devastating moment in his career was, and that began a conversation that is still going on," she said. Desilets, who was wearing fish-net stockings, white gloves, and a fur-collared sweater, and whose blond bun had several pencils sticking out of it, has become Lapidus's business partner and, it sometimes seems, his road manager. On this trip, Lapidus passed up the chance to stay in one of his own hotels, the Sheraton Centre (the former Americana) or Loews New York (the former Summit), which Loews is planning to restore. Both hotels have been renovated so much over the years that little remains of Lapidus's interiors, and the architect and his companion instead chose the Four Seasons, which was designed by I. M. Pei. "It's a beautiful building, but he's made every mistake in the book," Lapidus said. "When I first went in, I went up the stairs and I said, 'Where is the body?' The place looks like a mortuary."

Lapidus closed his office sixteen years ago, but he and Desilets "play around," he said. "We've designed some teapots and things." Lapidus, who started his career as an actor, is clearly relishing his stature as one of the elder statesmen of a profession that disdained him for so long.

At the Cooper-Hewitt, when Charlie Rose, who served as master of ceremonies, announced Lapidus's award, the architect, dressed in black tie, was wheeled onto the platform. He pushed himself up out of his wheelchair, stood tall at the lectern, and said, "My feeling always was, who am I trying to impress? I have tried all my life to create the kind of architecture that makes *people* satisfied. It has nothing to do with stone and mortar and marble. Too many architects forget who they are working for."

—*Paul Goldberger*

DEPT. OF STRETCHING
CALLING ALL HEAT-SEEKING NEW YORKERS



One of the reasons for going to a gym is to develop parts of the body—biceps, abs—that weren't there before. At the Bikram Yoga Studios of New York, more unusual body parts are also pressed into use. "Stare into your third eye," an instructor insisted one recent evening at the SoHo branch, as half a dozen sweating, straining, would-be yogis attempted to balance on their left leg, grab their right foot, straighten their right leg, and kick it forward into a perfect L shape. In spite of the effort involved—there were audible gasps—perfect L shapes were about as easy to spot as third eyes.

Bikram yoga, otherwise known as "hot yoga," because the classes are held in a room that is heated to a hundred and five degrees, was developed by Bikram Choudhury, a fifty-four-year-old Indian transplanted to Beverly Hills, who is given to driving Rolls-Royces and dressing in slinky leatherette shirts. The first New York studio opened a little over a year ago in the theatre district; this month, a third location opened on the Upper West Side. Recently, the studio held an anniversary party in a spectacular loft overlooking Bryant Park, which featured none of the lentils-and-rice asceticism that is so often associated with yoga. There were cocktails, and plates piled with cheeses and olives and chocolate brownies, and a jazz trio was playing, and the most frequently used opening line of the evening was "Have you got a light?"

Bikram wasn't at the New York party, but he would have felt at home there among the buff men in tight T-shirts and the women in next to nothing, all looking as if they were auditioning for bit parts in "Sex and the City." Many of them probably *had* auditioned for bit parts in "Sex and the City," because Bikram yoga tends to attract dancers and actors. These are people who are generally much more at home with ashtrays than ashrams, so the evening had a definite East-meets-West-and-West-completely-ignores-East feel.

Meg Paul and Adriana Ostling, who are both dancers and Bikram devotees, were out on the terrace, both of them wearing tight pants and handkerchief tops, the kind of attire that would be grounds for stoning in India. "Dancers are very into their bodies, which is why we like yoga," explained Paul, who has long, curly blond hair.

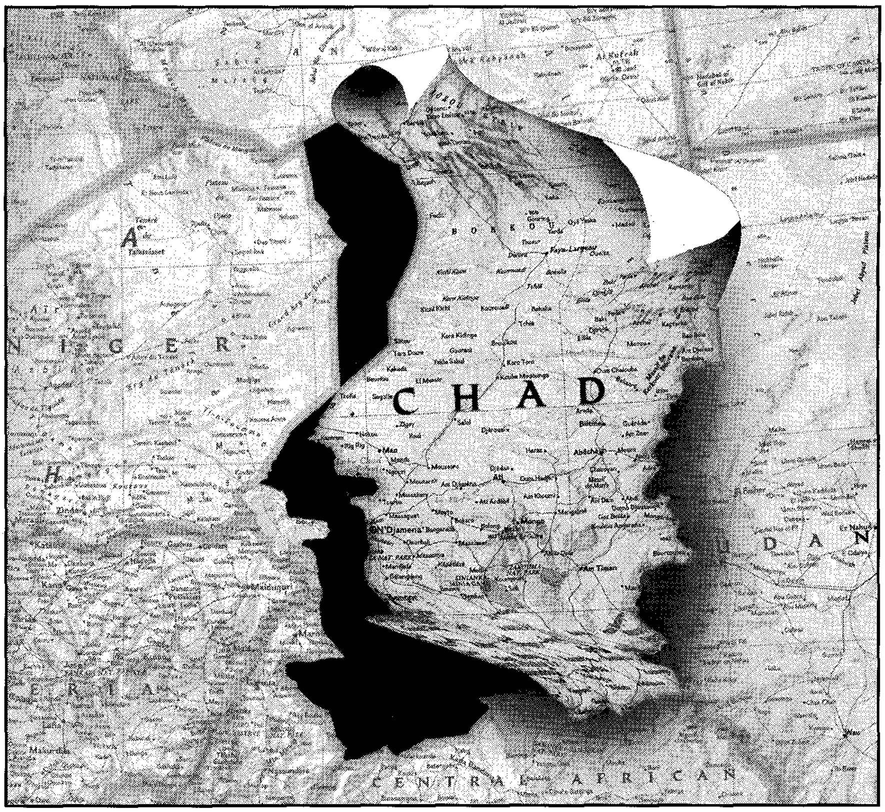
"But you're not supposed to be competing in yoga," Ostling added. "You are not supposed to bring your ego."

"Yeah, that's difficult," Paul said. She demonstrated her favorite pose, the Bow, by raising a leg into an arabesque and stretching an arm out in front. Then Ostling threw her head back and thrust her chest forward. "I like this one," she called out. "Where you bend back and grab your ankles—what's it called? The Tortoise?"

"No, this is the Tortoise," Paul said, bending forward at the waist with her arms outstretched, all cleavage and curls.

Farther down the terrace, Raffael Pacitti was holding a cigarette in his right hand while balancing a glass of white wine and a copy of "Twelfth Night" in his left. Pacitti, who is tall and fashionably gaunt, explained that he is an actor, although he also works as the tea sommelier at the midtown restaurant Local. He has been practicing yoga for almost a year, and it has already changed his life: for one thing, he is down to smoking only three cigarettes a day. And he has a new favorite muscle. "I have this thing here that I just love," he said, pointing to his thigh. But the heated room—Bikram's electricity bill for October was fifteen hundred dollars—remains daunting. Sometimes Pacitti has felt close to fainting, although so far he never has. "But I've kind of wanted to faint," he admitted. "I'd like the drama."

—*Rebecca Mead*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COURT CIRCULAR
HONORABLE MENTION

It's not every day that someone who used to work down the hall gets invested by the Queen of England, no less, into the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, no less, but that's what happened last Tuesday, at Buckingham Palace, no less. As a result, the ink-stained wretch formerly known as Tina Brown has been transformed, at least until she gets back to New York this week, into a character from a fairy tale (or is it a P. G. Wodehouse novel?) referred to by the royal protocol office as Christina Hambley Brown, C.B.E. The "C" stands for Commander. That jibes with our experience of Tina, who was the editor of this magazine from 1992 until 1998 (before that, she did her commanding at *Vanity Fair,* and now she does it at *Talk,* the Miramax monthly), though we had been unaware of her multisyllabic, triple-barrelled "real" name until it turned up on the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

We've been trying to figure out just how big an honour this is. On the minus side, the Queen's little list has at least a thousand names on it, which seems rather a lot, especially when you consider that she does this twice a year. On the plus side, C.B.E.s, though outranked by knights (of which there were only twenty-five this time, including Michael Caine), are higher on the pecking order than O.B.E.s, or Officers of the Order of the British Empire, and higher still than M.B.E.s, or Members of the Order of the British Empire—and the Beatles (the Beatles!) were only M.B.E.s. Q.E.D., if you ask us. Tina's fellow-C.B.E.s, this time, included Dick Francis (the jockey turned mystery writer), Sam Mendes (the director of "American Beauty"), and the actress Sian Phillips. J. K. Rowling, of Harry Potter fame, got an O.B.E. Lonnie Donegan, the pop musician, got an M.B.E.

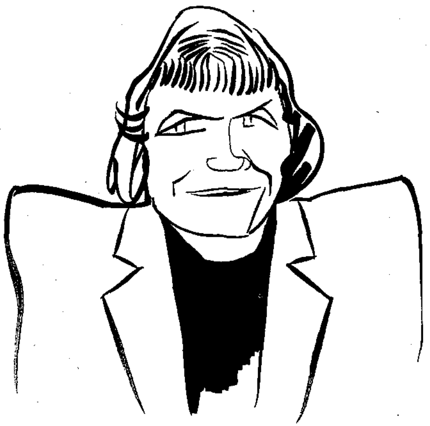
As it happens, last Tuesday was also Tina's birthday, though it was neither of the Queen's birthdays (the second Saturday in June is the official one, and April 21st, the biological one), so we called her—Tina, that is—at the London hotel where she was staying with her family, to wish her happy birthday. She was in an excellent mood, having just returned from the investiture ceremony, where she had been presented to the Queen, in between Colonel Alexander Malcolm Mason, of the Royal Marines, and Miss Deirdre Christine Fordham, former manager of the Disability Policy Division of the Department for Education and Employment. "I'm bursting with pent-up patriotism," she told us merrily. "For some reason, I couldn't be happier to be on that long list in the *Times* you skipped when you were eighteen. And I've decided that the only way to age is to age English. Let the hair go silver, the middle go stouter, the stockings get thicker. It's the Lady Bracknell route. To hell with face-lifts!"

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

POSTSCRIPT
REMEMBERING ANDY LOGAN

Andy Logan, who died last week at the age of eighty, came to *The New Yorker* in 1942, straight from Swarthmore, and throughout her distinguished career here she readily conceded that she got the job only because so many of the men on the magazine's staff had gone off to serve in the Second World War. She would make this observation without rancor or cant; her reporting was too good, and her writing too engaging, to require a defense.

In the years when *The New Yorker* was routinely vilified as an exclusive fraternity, Andy Logan became its housemother, taking new arrivals in hand and introducing them around the office. Young reporters fresh out of college went to her when they had questions about reporting. Senior writers in search of a wise sounding board went to her to discuss ideas. And editors in search of a break from their labors went to her office to dish the latest gossip or to discuss the day's news. For decades, Talk of the Town pieces were written without bylines, but Andy felt that the department's young writers should not dwell in total anonymity, so every week when the Talk proofs came out she went to the magazine's makeup department, checked the Talk manuscripts to see who had written what, scrawled the writers' names on a page proof, and posted it on a hallway bulletin board. It would be impossible to overestimate the boost to morale.



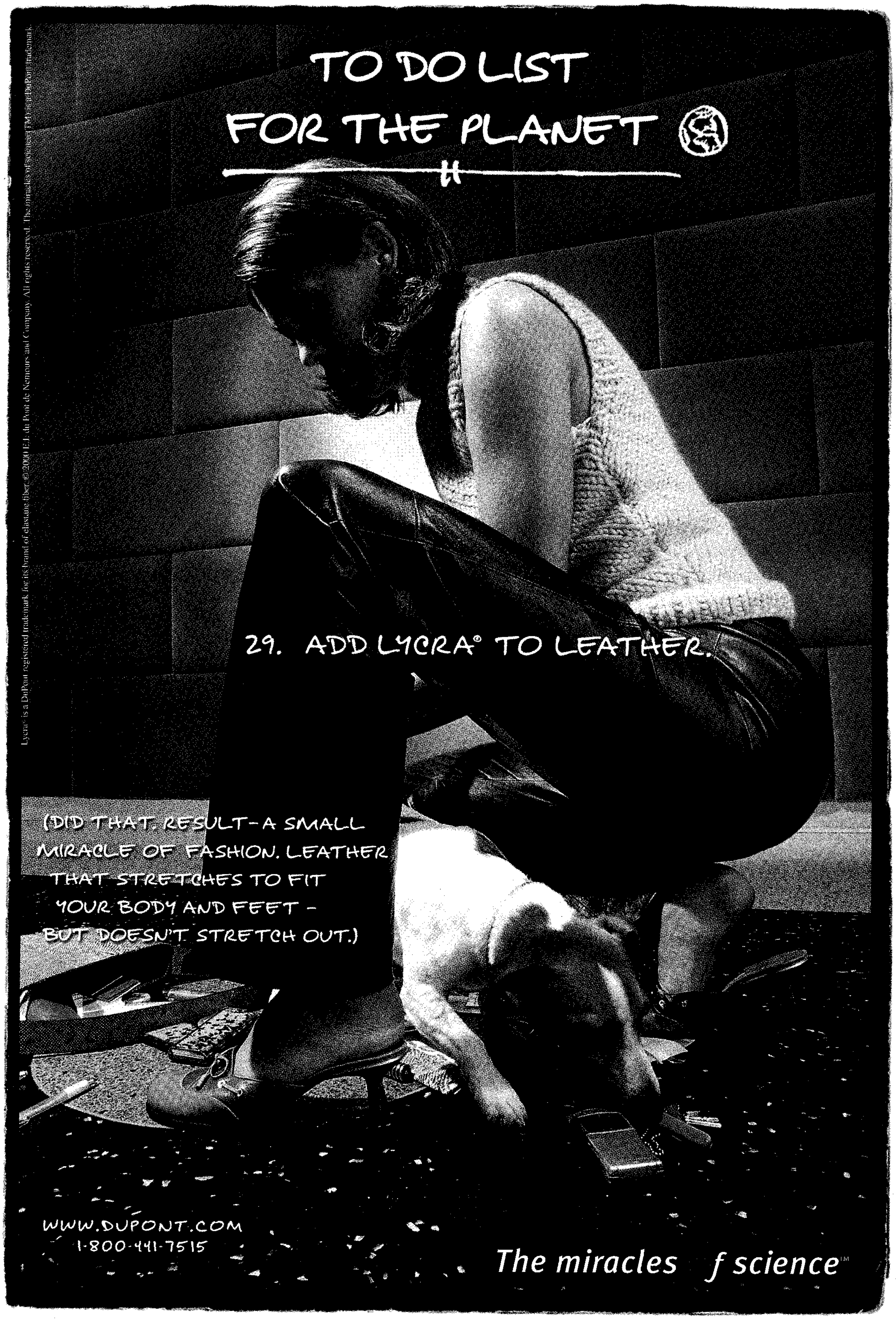
Andy Logan

Andy grew up in Candler, North Carolina, and in Cleveland. William Shawn, who was then the managing editor, took her on as the first female Talk of the Town reporter. Over the half-century-plus that she worked at *The New Yorker*, she contributed hundreds of thousands of words: Talk pieces, Profiles, That Was New York, Letters from Nuremberg (her husband, Charles Lyon, was deputy chief counsel at the Nuremberg war-crimes trials), the Christmas toy list and, most famously, the Around City Hall column. She also found the time to write two vivid and absorbing books about scandal in New York City—"The Man Who Robbed the Robber Barons" and "Against the Evidence."

It was probably Andy's interest in local matters that prompted Shawn to suggest, in 1969, that she write a column about municipal politics. She took to it instantly, covering mayors from John Lindsay through Rudolph Giuliani. When it came to politicians, she knew the difference between fairness, which was mandatory, and objectivity, which was, at best, elusive. Her admiration for John Lindsay was manifest, and Ed Koch felt that her hostility toward him was scarcely veiled. And although she was usually subtle about her likes and dislikes, readers always knew when she found a politician insufferable. She once referred to Mario Procaccino, the tear-prone winner of the Democratic primary for mayor in 1969, as "the Weeper."

Andy wrote that she regarded both Harold Ross and William Shawn "with gratitude and love." By the time Shawn suggested that she write the City Hall column, he had become a monumental figure in American journalism, and though Andy was always deferential to him, she was never servile. (She thrilled younger colleagues by referring to him casually as "Bill.") In the early days of the column, she joined battle with Shawn over the question of how the *Daily News* should be referred to in the magazine. *New Yorker* style dictated that the paper was just "the *News*," but Andy wanted to call it by its full name. For the first several columns that she wrote, Shawn sent along a proof flagging any reference to "the *Daily News*" and suggesting that she use just "the *News*." She acceded initially, but she argued. She sent notes, and, quietly, made noise about this irritating bit of magazine style. One day, her editor went into her office and she proudly showed him a Shawn proof on the piece that was going to press that week. She had written, as always, "the *Daily News*," and this time Shawn, instead of urging the deletion of "*Daily*" from the title, had written, "O.K. as style for City Hall. Miss Gould and I made this momentous decision when we had absolutely nothing else to do." She won a concession from Shawn and got a joke out of him, too. In that matter, as in so many matters that Andy Logan scrutinized and wrote so well about over the years, she was absolutely correct.

—*C. P. Crow*



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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
PRICE-FIXING FOR DUMMIES

"At thirteen million dollars, the bid is against you, Charlie," the auctioneer called out. "At nineteen million dollars, the bid is on the telephone." A few seconds later, Manet's "Jeune Fille dans un Jardin" sold for more than twenty million dollars, and someone behind me wondered aloud, "How much is fifteen per cent of that again?" The question was right on the money, though the figure was a little off. Even taking into account the work that Sotheby's did before the sale, the auction house's commission (which was closer to ten per cent) represented a nice chunk of change. Good thing, too, because to keep the bill collectors happy Sotheby's will have to move a whole bunch of "Jeune Fille"s.

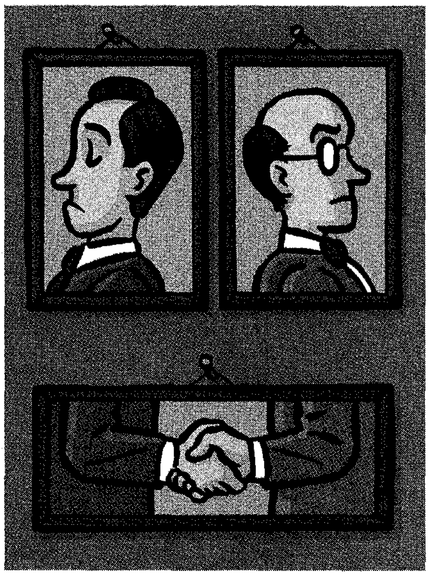
The auction, a few weeks ago, was the first major sale at Sotheby's since the company admitted to conspiring with Christie's to fix prices on the commissions they charged sellers. Now Sotheby's faces a forty-five-million-dollar fine, along with a tab for two hundred and fifty-six million dollars to settle a class-action lawsuit.

This was not the future that Sotheby's former C.E.O. Diana Brooks and Christie's former C.E.O. Christopher Davidge had in mind when, in the mid-nineteen-nineties, they met, in limousines and remote restaurants, to work out the details of their price-fixing plan. They foresaw a paradise of rising revenues and healthy profits. No more haggling, no more discounts. Just a wink, a nod, and a secure share of one of the world's most glamorous and lucrative markets. Instead, the two companies now find their good names sullied, their finances in disarray.

Throughout their ordeal, the prevailing cocktail-party question has been "How did they think they'd get away with it?" But the question we should be asking is "Why did they bother?" Fixing prices wasn't just illegal. It was unnecessary. Everything Sotheby's and Christie's wanted to get from their secret deal—control of the market, firm prices, steady profits—they already had. But, as Adam Smith wrote in "The Wealth of Nations," "People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices."

The allure is obvious. Price-fixing arrangements let you charge higher prices. You can stop worrying whether coveted customers are going to pit you against your rivals. And in a business with just a few players—like Sotheby's and Christie's—it's easier to make sure your partner in crime isn't cheating on the deal.

Of course, price-fixing has its costs—getting busted, going to jail—so its rewards need to be high to make it worthwhile. Companies that are given to price-fixing tend to be those that sell commodities, not canvases. In a commodity business—like oil or grain—one company's products are essentially identical to those offered by its competitors. Price is the only real difference between them. And since it's easy to produce more of a commodity, prices can quickly tumble if too much supply comes on the market. That's why, over the years, companies have got caught fixing the prices of graphite electrodes, food preservatives, vitamins, and paper products, among other things. And that's why the price of crude oil is, in effect, fixed by a cartel.


CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

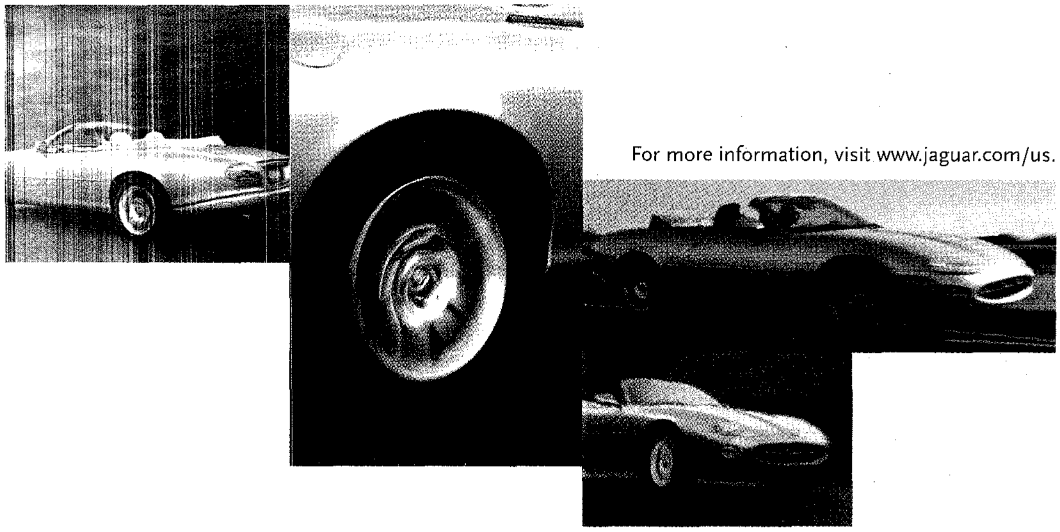
The auction market is another beast. Even without price-fixing, it's uncompetitive, since Sotheby's and Christie's control more than ninety per cent of it. Besides, it's a classic service business, built more on relationships than on price. Sotheby's competes with Christie's in much the same way that one plastic surgeon competes with another; people tend to entrust their chins and their estate sales to the guy they know, not to the quack with the lowest price.

In other words, Sotheby's and Christie's could easily have charged similar, even identical, prices without taking that extra—and disastrously illegal—step of having Brooks and Davidge rig the game. Look at Wall Street. Between 1995 and 1999, investment banks took more than two thousand companies public. The vast majority paid a commission of seven per cent or more to their bankers. The underwriting fee, for all intents and purposes, is fixed, yet there's no evidence that the bosses at Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, and Merrill Lynch huddled in the library of the Union Club to shake on a secret deal.

You can see the same phenomenon at work even in businesses where price really does matter, like gas stations or supermarkets. They hesitate to start price wars because of uncertainty about how their competitors will respond. Airlines, for example, often announce fare increases, then wait to see if other carriers will follow suit before deciding whether to put those increases into effect. If Sotheby's and Christie's each felt the need to raise prices back in 1995, each had good reason to believe that the other would do so, too. In fact, they could have looked back on their own history for reassurance. Since the nineteen-seventies, the companies had raised prices on buyers one right after the other without provoking any criminal prosecution.

Brooks and Davidge were in a business tailor-made for what economists call "conscious parallelism"—price-fixing without the smoke-filled room. It's what happens when an industry is dominated by a few elephants that, simply because they're paying close attention to one another, end up charging prices that are very similar and are higher than what they'd be able to charge in a competitive market. Conscious parallelism is the natural product of any oligopolistic industry—an industry, in other words, like the auction business. In futzing with their fees, Brooks and Davidge forgot the oldest rule of all: if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

—*James Surowiecki*



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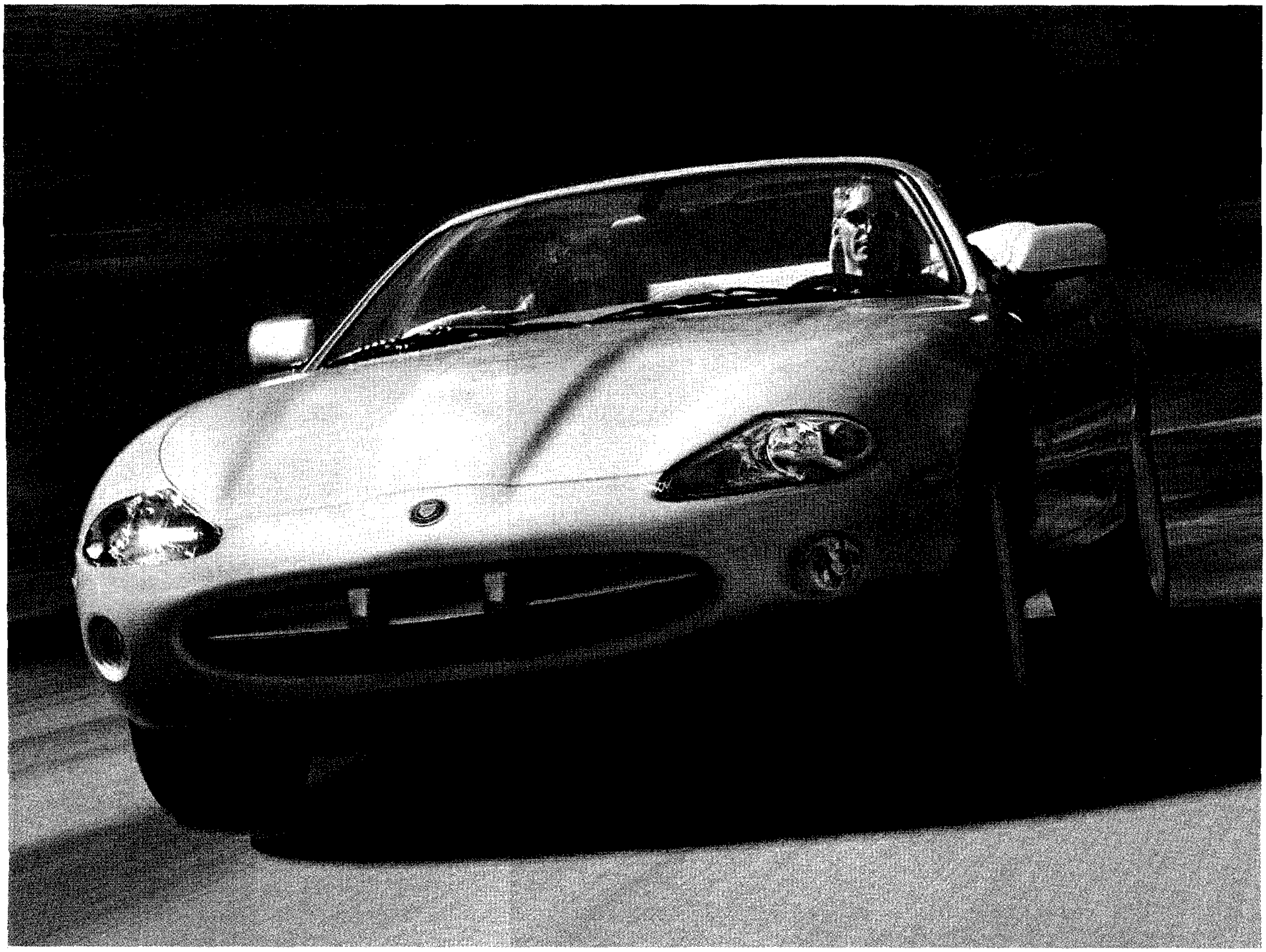

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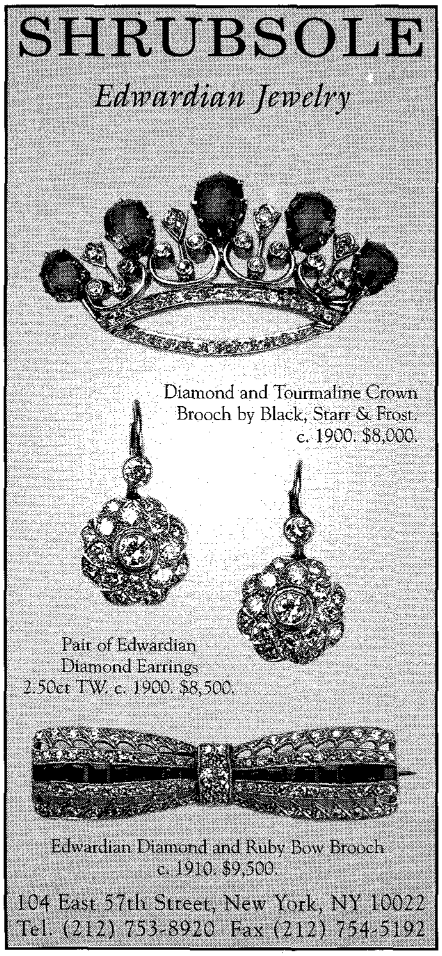

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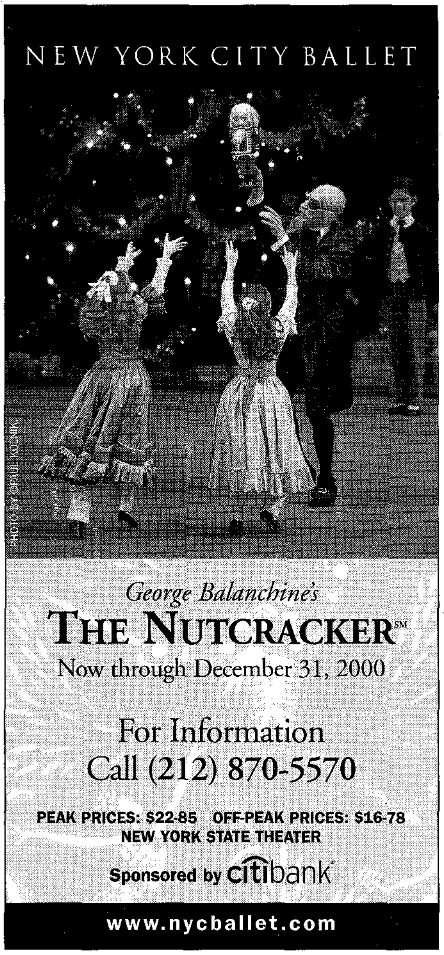

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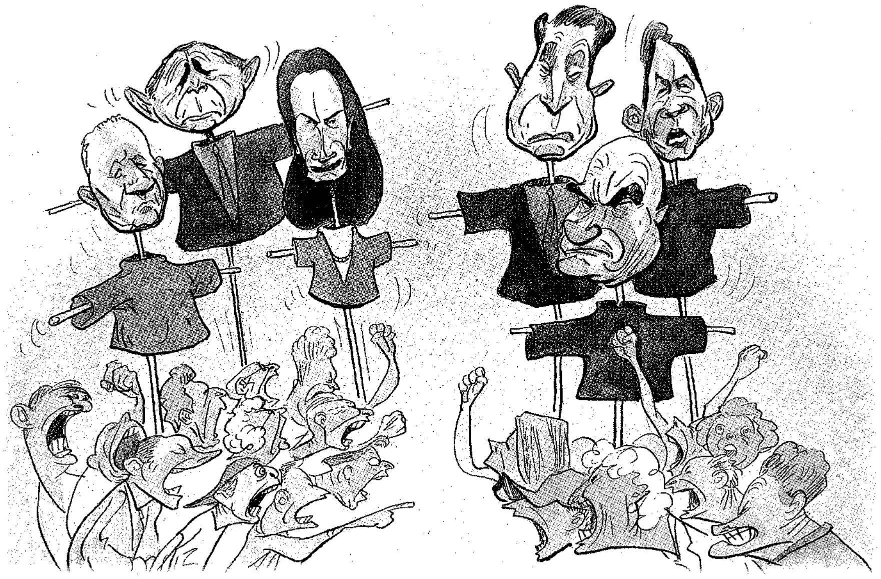
ANNALS OF LAW

THE COUNTING HOUSE

Have the Presidency and litigation become permanently entwined?

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

Last week, David Boies argued, and won, what was possibly the most important legal case in the history of American Presidential elections—a case that has now reached the United States Supreme Court—but it still didn't entitle him to an office in the Tallahassee war room of Al Gore's campaign. On Monday, November 20th, when Boies persuaded the Florida Supreme Court to compel Secretary of State Katherine Harris to accept hand-counted ballots in her tabulations of the Presidential race, he was the newest member of the already sizable team, and had to settle for a card table in a hallway—that is, when he wasn't reviewing legal papers in the lobby of the Sun Trust Building, downtown. The Gore quarters were cramped—Warren Christopher and William Daley had to share space—but there was no mistaking that they were housed in a law office. There were no posters, bumper stickers, or volunteers stuffing envelopes. Only the televisions in the library and the hall, tuned to CNN's coverage of the election battle, revealed that this was also a campaign headquarters. A few blocks away, George W. Bush's team had settled inside the Republican Party's state headquarters, which is called the George Bush Republican Center, after the candidate's father. But there, too, stacks of legal papers lined the tables and floors of what had become, in essence, a litigation factory.



The shared belief that the other side is breaking the rules has set the tone throughout.

STEVE BRODNER

The extraordinary dénouement of this year's Presidential election is due primarily to the closeness of the popular and electoral votes, but the battle over this race has also reflected a continuing trend in American politics—a blurring of the political and legal systems. To be sure, political scandal—and scandal's attendant lawyers—is nothing new. But since the Watergate era the process seems to have reached a sort of zenith; the rhythm of a nightmarish—and sometimes comic—national melodrama has come to seem as natural as the ceaseless buzz of all-news television. George W. Bush or Al Gore will now be the fourth consecutive President whose tenure will be compromised by legal disputes. The difference is that those earlier controversies—the Iran-Contra investigation of Presidents Reagan and Bush, the Lewinsky affair and the impeachment of President Clinton—stemmed from investigations of conduct in the White House. This one has to do with the legitimacy of a new President's claim to the office. And, despite unctuous public assertions by the candidates themselves that the dispute concerns principles of democracy and fairness, the lawyers on both sides—in all their briefs, news conferences, and interviews over the past two and a half weeks—have acted less as if they had been guided by the Founders than as if they were led by a source who was never identified by name: Al Davis, the owner of the Oakland Raiders football team, who long ago clarified his intentions for his players and coaches with the exhortation "Just win, baby."

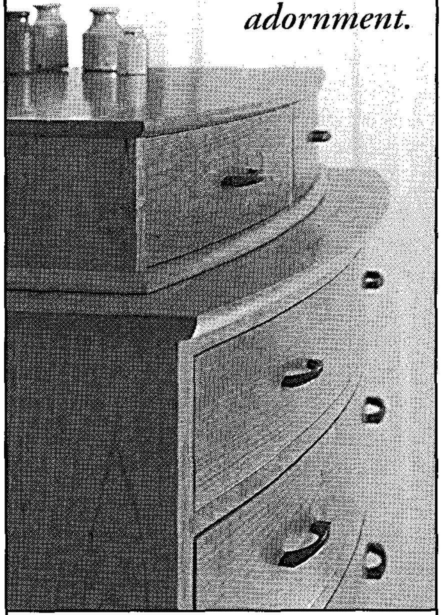
In ordinary circumstances, the dismal state Capitol Building here is an object of some amusement for the locals. Designed by the architect Edward Durell Stone and dedicated in 1978, the structure consists of a phallic tower with two large domes—the chambers of the state House and Senate—on either side. Like many buildings of the seventies, the Capitol is aging poorly—its façade chipped and battered—though its absence of charm remains intact. This battle for Florida, however, has revealed one of the building's unexpected virtues: it is an efficient place to host an electoral crisis.

Notwithstanding the daily surprises, the pace of life here since November 8th has become almost predictable. For instance, on November 16th, the State Supreme Court allowed the manual recounting of ballots to continue. That prompted Warren Christopher, Gore's former Secretary of State-in-residence, and William Daley, the Vice-President's campaign manager, to make a trip to the Senate side of the Capitol, where a first-floor room has been converted to a press facility and the cameras remain fastened to their tripods. "We are obviously gratified," Daley said. The following morning, Leon County Circuit Court Judge Terry Lewis ruled that Secretary of State Harris had legitimately used her discretion to ignore hand-counted votes—a decision that favored the Republicans. After that, James A. Baker, the former Secretary of State, who is leading the Bush effort, made his way to the briefing room. "The rule of law has prevailed," Baker said. Sometimes the tit for tat has been repeated twice in a day. Less often in the past week, the featured attraction has been Katherine Harris herself—the briefing room is not far from the Florida Secretary of State's office. For a while, to get there she had to thread her way past the many floral arrangements that were delivered to her office.

Florida's Sunshine Law, which guarantees greater public access to government proceedings than is possible in most other states, has also helped to set the tone for these events. For instance, in the past few weeks the Florida courts have done more than simply allow a single camera in a courtroom: they have permitted all camera operators and photographers to take pictures of the participants before the broadcasting of the actual proceedings. During the hearings in Leon County Circuit Court, the lawyers were surrounded at their tables by what looked like a scrum of paparazzi; the courtroom of the State Supreme Court resembled a television studio, with four cameras stationed in permanent locations and the walls lined with special acoustic fabric. The practice of letting court personnel announce verdicts from podiums in front of their courthouses has created a new class of instant celebrities, including Terre Cass, who speaks for the Leon County court, and Craig Waters, who is the voice of the Supreme Court.

The paths of the adversaries never cross, and, beyond the courtroom, communication between the two sides has been minimal. The nature of the dispute—who will become the next President?—is uniquely unsuited to compromise, so the parties have simply gone all out against each other. "I always try to think about how the other side is thinking of a problem," one lawyer for Gore told me. "They think we're cheating. So they are going to our level. They feel justified in doing everything because they think we are doing everything." Neither side will admit to cheating, but the shared belief that the other side is breaking the rules has characterized the contest from the start.

The battle of Florida has also shown, almost accidentally, what happens when lawyers and politicians engage in battle. For example, the first lawsuit filed by a candidate came on November 11th, and was brought by the Bush campaign, in Miami federal court. Led by the accomplished Washington attorney Theodore B.



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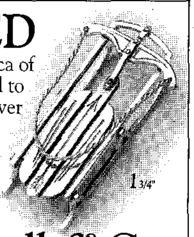

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Olson, the Bush forces argued, two days later, that the Florida system of manual recounts was so chaotic as to amount to a violation of the equal protection and due process of law guaranteed by the United States Constitution. “Votes in Florida may not constitutionally be counted differently in different areas,” Olson told District Judge Donald M. Middlebrooks, “and government officials may not count votes according to an inconsistent, standardless, and infinitely subjective process.” This argument conflicted with one of the core principles of the Republican Party: the federalist ideal of local control, free from interference by meddlesome federal judges and bureaucrats. “It was filed over the urgent objections of several of the people involved,” one of the lawyers on the Bush team told me. “But the idea was you go with what you have. It was the only solution of any kind available at the time.” But that option, too, disappeared, on November 13th, when Judge Middlebrooks dismissed the Republicans’ case.

The Bush forces had no monopoly on this kind of cynicism. Arguing for the Democrats was Laurence H. Tribe, the Harvard law professor. Defending the Florida process before Judge Middlebrooks, Tribe cited San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez, a 1973 case in which the Supreme Court ruled that unequal funding of school districts in Texas was permissible under the Constitution—a result that liberals like Tribe have attacked. In an ordinary lawsuit, these actions—and citations—might be routine; Olson and Tribe would merely be serving their clients. But Bush and Gore are unusual clients—two men with different political beliefs who want to be President. Has Bush become a convert to federal supervision of state action? Does Gore now believe that poor districts in Texas lack the right to equal resources? Or are both candidates, through their representatives and satraps, simply doing what it takes to win?

At about 3 A.M. on Election Night, just after Vice-President Gore recanted his concession to Governor Bush, about twenty members of Gore’s senior staff convened in the Nashville office building that served as Gore’s campaign headquarters to listen to a presentation from John Hardin Young. Jack Young, a fifty-two-year-old lawyer, has held a variety of jobs, including general counsel for a construction firm and for the White House’s Office of Administration; he was in Tennessee in his capacity as the chairman of an organization of lawyers who volunteer for the Democratic Party. But Young has also cultivated a hitherto obscure hobby: becoming one of the foremost recount experts in the country. He is a co-author, with Chris Sautter and Tim Downs, of a privately printed monograph called “The Recount Primer,” which he has circulated to Democratic campaigns since the mid-nineties.

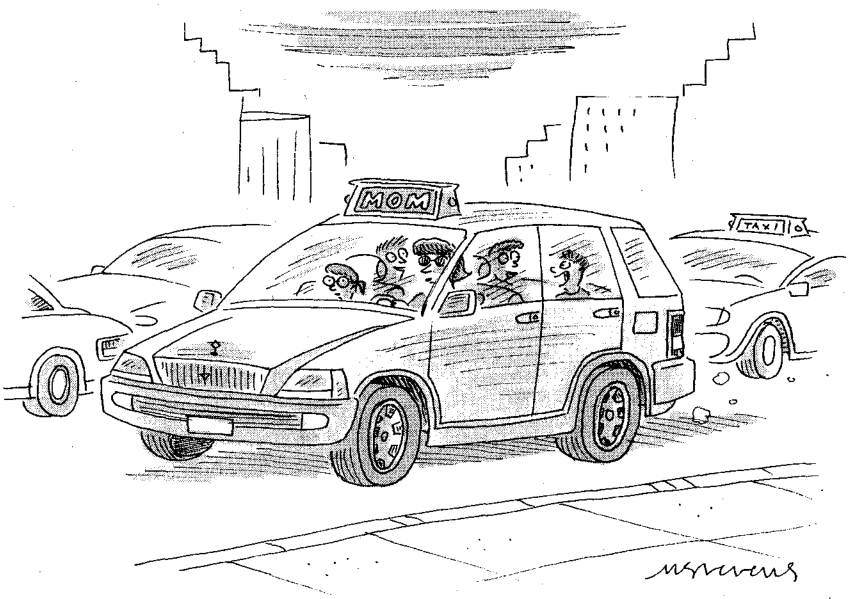
“I told them my cardinal rule of recounts,” Young said to me last week by telephone from Miami, where he was working with the Gore forces on the recount in Miami-Dade County. “Before you make any decision in a recount, you have to gather all the information. I laid out a program that said, essentially, ‘We need to get more data.’ Then we can find out if something had gone wrong systemically.”

On Election Day, the Gore campaign had been alerted to problems with the now infamous butterfly ballot in Palm Beach County, so Young did a quick regression analysis of Pat Buchanan’s vote, which suggested that Buchanan had probably received more votes than he should have. “There were a lot of people that night who wanted to go into federal court right away,” Young said. “But I advised them that we needed to concentrate on information gathering first.” He was joined by his friend Sautter, whom Young described to me as “the king of the chads.”

The campaign leadership decided to send the plane that had been used by Joe Lieberman’s Vice-Presidential campaign and fly staffers to Florida, to start identifying possible errors in the state’s ballots and returns. They took a break so that the team—about fifty people—could shower and pack, and then gathered at the Nashville airport just after dawn. They had hoped to avoid publicity, but that notion foundered moments after the plane made its first stop, in Tallahassee. As it happened, the plane that landed right behind them belonged to Florida Governor Jeb Bush, who was returning from Austin. As the Gore troops stepped on the tarmac, Young, who had accompanied the contingent, told the flight attendant how to bid them farewell: “Thank you for flying Recount One.”

Young had worked successfully on two of three high-profile statewide recounts of the current political generation—the victory of the Democrat L. Douglas Wilder in the 1989 governor’s race in Virginia, and Parris Glendening’s win over the Republican Ellen Sauerbrey in the 1994 governor’s race in Maryland. (In the third, without Young, Harry Reid, also a Democrat, from Nevada, held on to his seat in the United States Senate in 1998.) The Gore-Bush contest in Florida differed from these others not merely because the stakes were higher but because, on a percentage basis, the race was much, much closer.

Young’s experience had left him with a strong bias against filing lawsuits prematurely. “Compared to suing, winning an election on a recount is a much preferred outcome, in time, effort, and voter perception,” he told me. “Any time you go to



court, you are imposing another branch of government between the voters and the people they elect. If you get into a litigation mode and you don't make it, your political career is usually over. In Maryland, Sauerbrey never got over it. They called her Ellen Sore Loser, and Parris beat her by a wide margin four years later."

With his admonition to the senior staff on Election Night, Young was able to keep the pro-litigation forces within the Gore campaign at bay, but not for long. On the day after Recount One landed in Florida, William Daley, at a press conference in the briefing room of the Capitol, said the Gore campaign would be "working with voters in Florida in support of legal actions." His comments brought swift condemnation in editorials in the *Times* and the Washington *Post*, as well as a notable lack of support from fellow-Democrats; Daley backed away from his comments the next day. Both campaigns have their hawks and doves, and Daley has generally been the public face of confrontation for the Gore team. But behind the scenes, according to several Gore aides, the toughest partisan may be one of the more unexpected—Joe Lieberman. "Every time we've had a discussion about the question of how tough to be, he has been very aggressive," one member of the Gore team told me. Tom Nides, who was the campaign manager for the Connecticut senator, acknowledged this. "As a former [state] Attorney General and as a lawyer, he thinks we should have all our options on the table because of how strongly he feels that we won the election," Nides told me. "He made ten trips down to Florida. He sat in the condos in Palm Beach with these seniors, and he knows they didn't go to vote for Pat Buchanan. He thinks we need to do what's right for the country, but he also feels like we won this election."

But in that first week what really took extended litigation off the table for Gore, at least briefly, were the numbers. On the morning after Election Day, the Secretary of State's unofficial tally put Bush ahead by 1,784 votes, out of nearly six million cast. Because the difference was less than half of one per cent, it triggered an automatic recanvass of all the voting machines. This so-called "mechanical recount," which took until November 10th to be completed, narrowed the gap to about three hundred votes. "That

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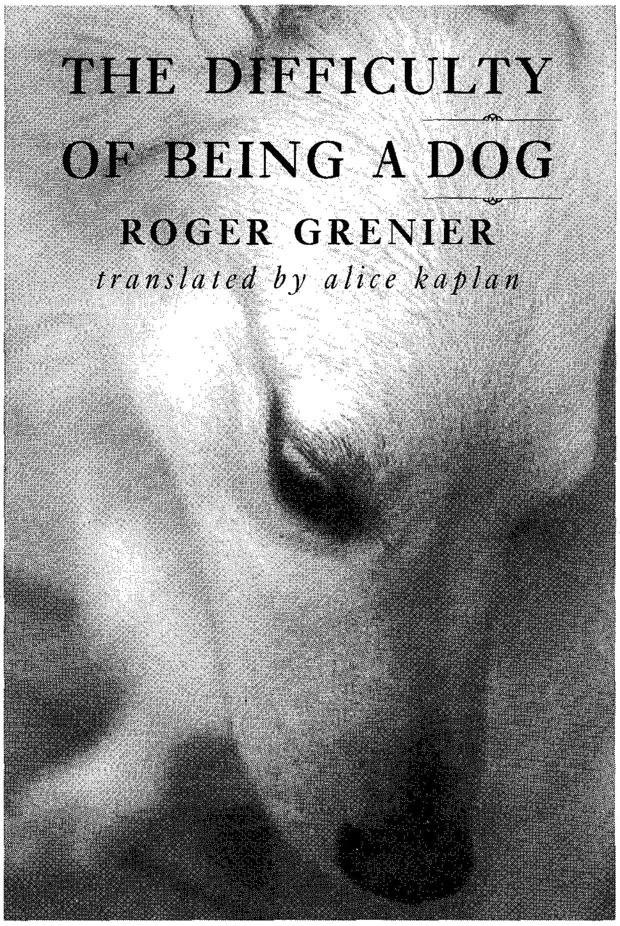
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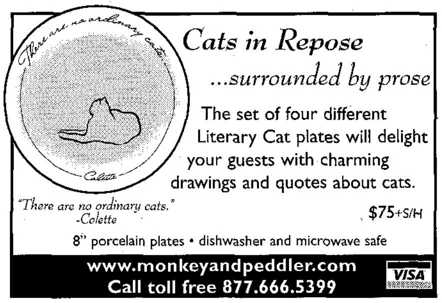
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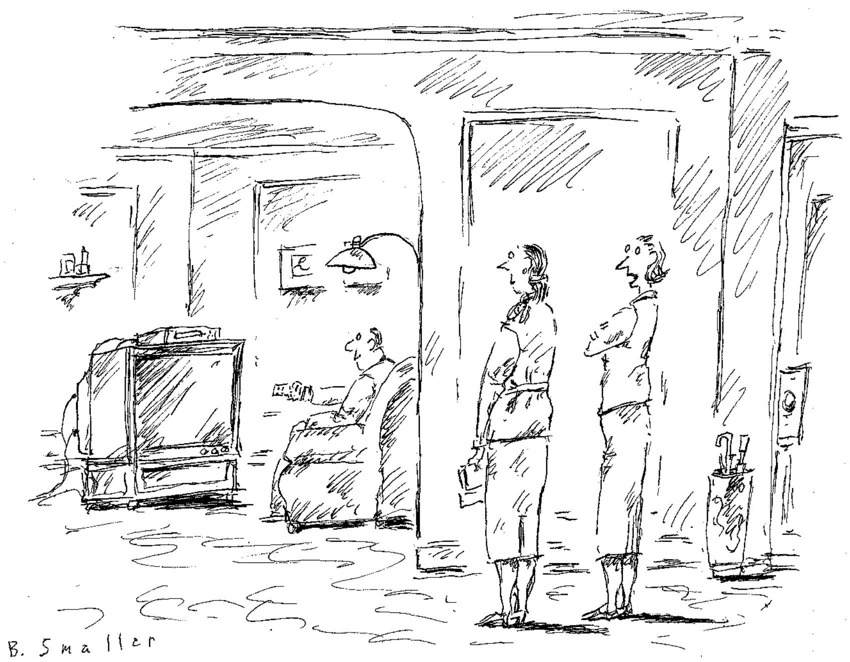

"Every few years, Gordon and the TV get a couple of inches wider."

• •

was a much more realistic margin for a recount," Young told me. "You didn't have to sue to pick up that many votes."

Going into the first weekend after Election Day, with its lead cut by more than three-quarters, the Bush team panicked—which led to Theodore Olson's claim before Judge Middlebrooks, in Miami, on November 13th. On that Monday, just six days after the election, Bush still had his narrow lead. But the Gore forces had chosen four counties—all Democratic strongholds—for manual recounts, hoping that their revised numbers would make up the gap. The Republicans, after missing with their first legal salvo, decided to put their home-field advantage to work against Gore. Their strategy could be summarized in two words: Katherine Harris.

For the Democrats, the problem was immediate: Harris, as Secretary of State, had said that Florida law required her to certify the results on November 14th—although the manual recounts were far from finished. (One of the four counties, Volusia, where Young had gone first, did complete its manual recount on Tuesday, with a net gain for Gore of ninety-eight votes.) The entire Presidential election, then, depended on Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade Counties, as well as on the uncounted ballots from overseas. As one Bush strategist told me, "Every day that those votes don't get counted, we're winning." That analysis has proved to be exactly right.

Some Democrats in Florida could not help but believe that Harris was colluding with the Bush forces; after all, she had been Florida's co-chairman for the Bush-Cheney campaign. In fact, there is no solid evidence of such duplicitous contacts, and Harris's lawyers and those for Bush insist that she has operated independently. Harris, who has long admired the Bush family, has, if anything, been completely open about her goals; indeed, she has pushed Bush's interests with an intensity that startled even the Texas governor's campaign.

Harris's icy confidence in exercising political power has been all the more striking because, in ordinary circumstances, she possesses very little power. (The office of Florida Secretary of State will cease to exist in 2002, its few responsibilities scattered around the bureaucracy.) On November 13th—when Judge Middlebrooks rejected the Bush claim in federal court—Harris joined the battle for Bush. In public statements, she insisted that she would accept no recounted-vote results after the Tuesday deadline; that the hand recounts were unauthorized; and that the three counties still counting had to justify their tardiness in writing. When they did write, she promptly rejected their reasons. On November 15th, at around 9 P.M., she took to the podium in the Capitol and insisted that she expected to certify the election on Saturday, November 18th. "We didn't know what she was going to do when she got up there to talk," a Bush lawyer told me. "She's got to have the biggest gonads in Florida."

For a while, it appeared as if the Bush legal strategy might crash at the doors of Florida's Supreme Court. One day after Katherine Harris said that she would go forward, the court gave Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade Counties permission to continue the hand count. The following day, they told Harris she could not certify the election as planned. The justices set Monday, November 20th, as the day for arguing the Democrats' broad challenge to Harris's authority, and the court sent several early signals that it would be taking close control of the case—and, with it, the election.

The argument was scheduled to begin at 2 P.M., but the lawyers and the credentialled press were required to arrive ninety minutes early. Combatants, seconds, and onlookers, therefore, were forced to sit like dutiful schoolchildren, in virtual silence, but the close quarters and shared discipline produced no bonhomie. The several lawyers who would be speaking shook hands and murmured polite greetings, but no one else uttered a word to an adversary. Baker and Christopher, the opposing former Secretaries of State, sat about as far from one another as possible, and did not appear even to exchange a glance. To fill the empty time, Christopher read and reread a day-old copy of the *Times'* Week in Review section. Compared to this awkward standoff, the actual arguments, which lasted about two and a half hours, were a relief.

It took less than a day for rumors to spread that a decision was imminent. And on the afternoon of November 21st, when Craig Waters remarked that the court was having "trouble with our photocopying," there was little doubt that an opinion was on its way. Tallahassee had been hit by a sudden cold wave, and reporters who had been sent north from south Florida battlefields huddled for shelter in the dozen or so tents that the networks had erected on the Capitol's plaza. By nightfall, the television lights lit up the neoclassical columns of the gemlike Supreme Court Building, so unlike the dreary Capitol Building, across the street. On Election Night, George W. Bush, in Austin, and Al Gore, in Nashville, had planned to stand before columns that looked something like these to claim victory—just as Bill Clinton had twice stood in front of the Old State House in Little Rock. This year, Craig Waters spoke the words that might decide who would be America's forty-third President.

The Supreme Court's decision, which Waters announced at nine-forty on Tuesday night, gave hope to Gore and his allies. The justices directed Secretary of State Harris to accept the manually counted votes from Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade, provided that these counties could complete their tallies by the night of Sunday, November 26th. But the following afternoon, the day before Thanksgiving, in a raucous scene in Miami, the canvassing board voted to stop its count because, the authorities said, there was no way they could complete it by the court's deadline.

On that same day, November 22nd, the Bush forces appealed the State Supreme Court's judgment—and District Judge Middlebrooks' earlier, federal decision, which had been affirmed by the court of appeals in Atlanta—to the United States Supreme Court. Republicans also filed yet another case to overturn the exclusion of certain absentee ballots, which had been mailed by military personnel overseas. Meanwhile, the Democrats sued to reinstate the hand counting in Miami-Dade. In quick succession, in a Thanksgiving one-two punch, two courts—an appeals court and the Florida Supreme Court—rejected the Gore claim that Miami-Dade was required to recount its votes. These defeats provoked the Democrats to threaten yet another lawsuit: they would contest the result of Harris's expected certification of the final tallies, no matter the outcome. And, to add to the pile of lawsuits, on Friday, November 24th, Democrats seemed prepared to challenge the decision by the chairman of the Palm Beach County canvassing board, who said he was not inclined to count dimpled ballots for the office of President if other choices had been clearly punched. This news was almost lost in the announcement that the United States Supreme Court had agreed to hear the Bush challenge, although not till the following Friday, December 1st. The election had turned into a fugue of litigation, which would end, it seemed, only when a judge—or a judge's spokesman—announced a winner. ♦

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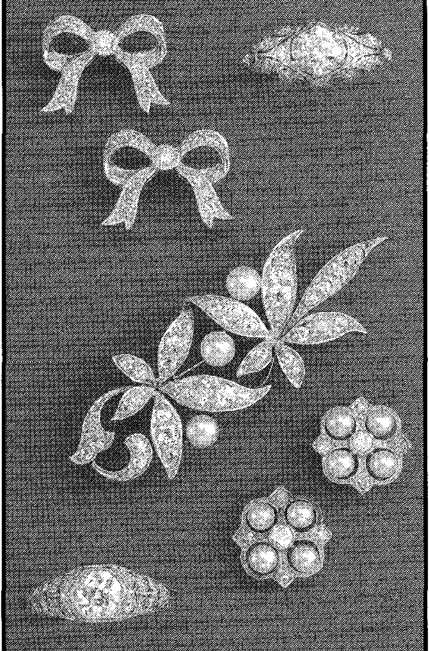

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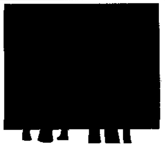

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THE POLITICAL SCENE

ALL TOGETHER NOW?

Why partisan bickering may be an essential part of the political system.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

About the only thing we can be fairly sure of now is that the next President of the United States will accept the office, first informally and then on Inauguration Day, with a fervent pledge of allegiance to the principle of bipartisanship. The pledge may even be heartfelt, but it won't be very reassuring. The last couple of weeks have shown the public how deeply Democrats and Republicans distrust each other; the last couple of years have shown that, even when the two parties work together, it has often been a matter of necessity rather than of bipartisan good will.

As President, Al Gore, conservative Democrat turned populist, would be a late and circumstance-driven convert to bipartisanship. In the past, he has been notably willing to depart from the Democratic Party position if he thought it was wrong, but he has not been the kind of politician who likes to sit around with the folks from the other party and schmooze his way to a deal. George W. Bush, in this as in practically everything else, is Gore's exact opposite. Bush loves bipartisanship. He ran on bipartisanship—in particular, on the idea that he would, in his often repeated phrase, end the "partisan bickering" in Washington. It is true that Bush's idea of nonpartisanship has run the focus-group gantlet and been found to be popular with swing voters who think politics is unpleasant, but it also comes from the heart. Bush appears truly to believe that he can change the tone of Washington. If you remove the pure competitiveness that is a primary motivation of most politicians, his desire to do this was the main reason he ran for President.

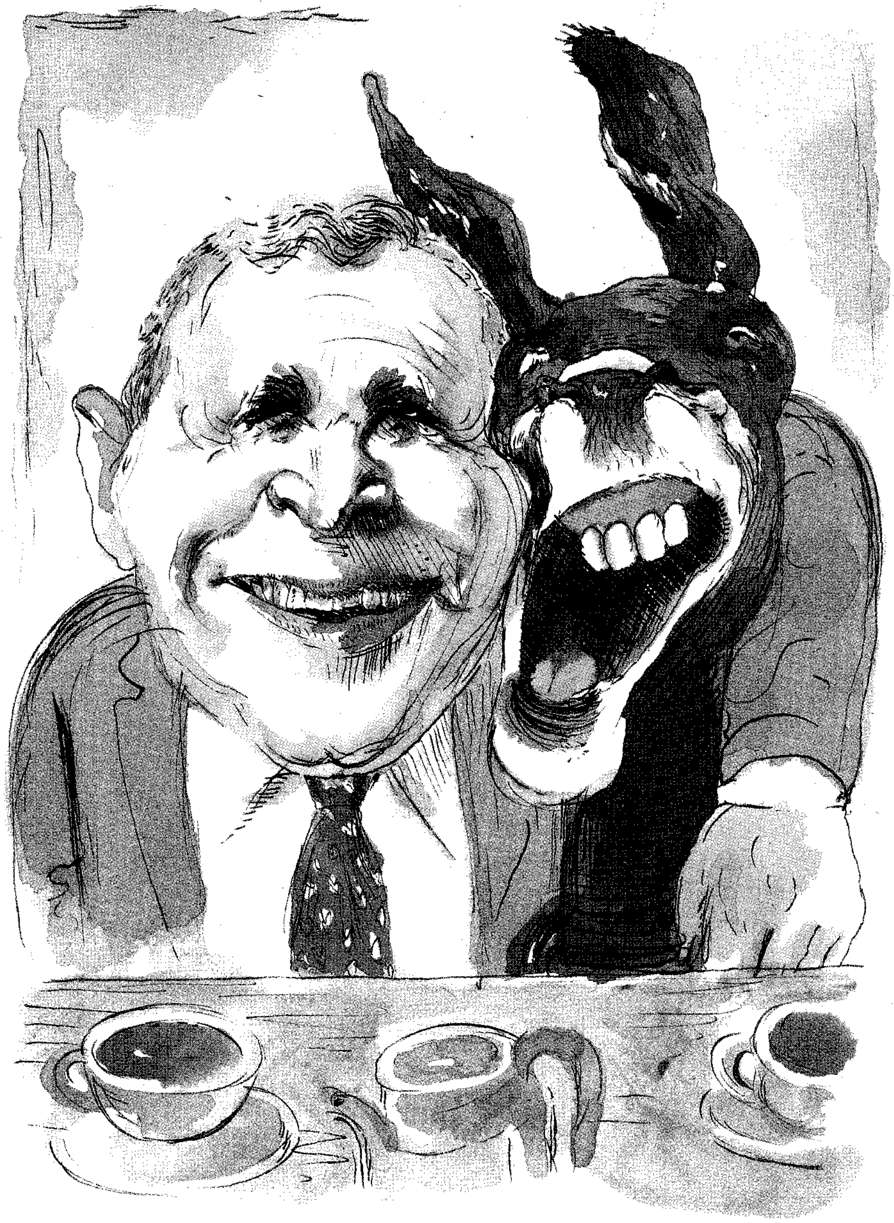
Bush's idea of nonpartisanship isn't as gauzy as it sounds. It is based on a specific experience in Texas, and a specific reading of the situation in Washington over the past few years. In a fractious, post-traumatic period in which bipartisanship has to be the stated ideal, a Bush Presidency would be a field test of a theory in a way that Gore's would not. Taking a close look at that strange word—which people not in politics never use in conversation, and which inside politics means different things to different people—is about as good a way as we have of finding out what kind of President Bush intends to be.

In Dallas a few days after the election, I dropped in on Mark Stiles, a recently retired Texas legislator who has to be a candidate for the title of George W. Bush's best buddy in the Democratic Party, now that Bob Bullock, the Texas lieutenant governor who played Yoda to Bush's Luke Skywalker, has died. When I lived in Texas in the late seventies and early eighties, I believed that the East Coast was an insubstantial region devoted entirely to trendiness and frippery, and this feeling came flooding back during my encounter with Stiles. First of all, he's a big guy, six feet four and maybe two hundred and forty pounds. He hunts. He fishes. He is "Group Vice-President, Concrete & Aggregate," at Trinity Industries, a corporation that makes big, basic stuff—barges, fittings, railway freight cars. In the reception area on the executive floor where Stiles works, there was a big-screen television, playing a videotape of a pickup truck smashing head on into a concrete highway safety barrier. "See that?" Stiles said. We watched admiringly as the truck smashed into the barrier again. "We make those." In his office, Stiles showed me a glass display case filled with enormous gavels that had been used in the Texas House of Representatives. He took one out, and demonstrated first the Washington way of gavelling, a wussy, hesitant little tap, and then the Texas way, a full-arm, crashing blow.

We had lunch in one of Trinity's executive dining rooms, where the chef had prepared meat loaf as that day's main course. Stiles told me the story of his political life. He grew up in the nineteen-fifties, when Texas was a one-party state, and had been for the full lifetimes of his parents and his grandparents. So he became a Democrat—"I didn't know there was any other way." In 1982, at the age of thirty-four, he was elected to the Texas House of Representatives from Beaumont, an industrial city in the southeast corner of the state. In 1988, he was a member of the steering committee of Al Gore's Presidential campaign in Texas, which struggled to a third-place finish in the Democratic primary. (He never heard from Gore again, he told me, until 1999, when he got a Gore family Christmas card.)

By the time Bush was elected governor, in 1994, Stiles was an important legislator—chairman of the House Calendars Committee, which decides which of the bills introduced will actually be debated and voted on. Bush called him just after the election and asked to meet with him, even though Stiles had campaigned for Bush's Democratic opponent, Ann Richards. That was the start of a beautiful friendship, some of the highlights of which were Stiles's support of Bush's legislation, Bush's visits to Stiles's hunting camp, Stiles's retirement from the legislature, when he turned over twenty-five thousand dollars from his campaign fund to Bush's 1998 gubernatorial reëlection campaign, and, finally, Stiles's appearance as a Bush spinner at the Democratic National Convention and at the first debate with Gore. This is exactly the kind of relationship with leading Democratic legislators that Bush believes he can have in Washington. In the Texas legislature today, the Democrats have seventy-eight seats in the House to the Republicans' seventy-two, the Republicans have sixteen seats in the Senate to the Democrats' fifteen, and Bush is hugely popular and gets along with practically everybody. That's the plan for a Bush Presidency, too.

The rapport that Bush achieved with Democrats like Mark Stiles can't be understood out of context—in fact, the rapport is the frosting and the context is the cake. At least since the end of the Second World War, Texas has had a tradition of ruthlessly pragmatic conservative Democratic politics as the ruling creed, with very little ideological competition. The Democratic governor of Texas in the nineteen-fifties, Allan Shivers, endorsed Dwight Eisenhower for President and had himself nominated as the gubernatorial candidate of both the Democratic and Republican Parties. For years after that, Texas voted unusually Republican in Presidential elections and unusually Democratic in state elections. At the state Capitol, it was pretty chilly out on the political margins, but the center was capacious and warm. As a politician, you were supposed to represent not principles but interests—your district, your ethnic group, cities, farmers—and ultimately bend to the common good, which was denoted by terms like "what's right for Texas," "what's best for the schoolchildren," or "what's beneficial for a healthy business climate," meaning whatever would help a relatively poor, rural state develop economically. The style that naturally went along with these goals was one of sociable deal-cutting.



Bush didn't end the bickering in Austin—there was no bickering to begin with.

BARRY BLITT

The Shivers entente couldn't hold forever. In the seventies and eighties, lots of Texans began voting Republican in state politics as well as in national politics, and Republicans became a solid presence in the legislature. The Democrats who ran the place had to decide how to respond to this, and over time they settled on a policy of dealing the Republicans in. The Texas House and Senate chambers have no center aisle with Democrats sitting on one side and Republicans on the other, as in Washington. The Speaker in the House (who is chosen by all the members, not just those from his party) and the Lieutenant Governor in the Senate have the sole authority to assign members to committees, and they do this without reference to party. In Washington, committee chairmen come from the majority party; in Texas, they're mixed, so it doesn't matter nearly as much which party has the majority. Party-line votes in the Texas legislature are rare. Displaying absolute party loyalty makes you suspect. Being practical-minded is the highest virtue.

It was into this atmosphere that George W. Bush came when he was elected governor. What he added was gregariousness and an inclination to compromise with legislators, even to let them take the lead. He ran on a platform of only four items, and in all four cases there were pending bills in the legislature that he simply amended and helped to push, even if their sponsors happened to be Democrats. The Texas governor's office is in the Capitol Building, so Bush could wander over to legislators' offices or invite them to drop by his, or even stroll onto the floor of the House or the Senate. The Governor's Mansion, a perfect site for loving up legislators, is just a block away.

Mark Stiles continued his story: "After Bush became governor, some Democrats stayed partisan, and they put themselves in an outcast position. The true believers. Likewise, there were people on the other side whom we called the Shiites, because they were so right-wing. They were afraid to talk to Bush, because they were afraid he might talk them into something. Then, there were members who were like business consultants"—this said in a way that made it clear Stiles doesn't think much of business consultants—"because they'd identify problems without finding solutions. Pretty soon, they found themselves out of the process. They took themselves out. It's what I call self-selection.

"You're on the floor, they bring you a note: 'The Governor would like to see you at your convenience.' The other members see it, they're impressed. You go in. He says, 'Hey, Markie, what's goin' on?' You sit next to each other in those big chairs. He says, 'Now, what're we gon' do about this thing? What's the next step to keep the process goin'?' He comes after you. He puts his hand on your arm"—Stiles came over to demonstrate on me, pointing out that Bush, like Lyndon Johnson, would shake your right hand and then start freelancing up and down your arm with his left hand while you were shaking—"and he says, 'How's your business? How's your family?' And his hand's movin' up your arm. Now he's got his arm around your shoulder." Stiles had his arm around my shoulder and his head in close. I wanted to vote for his legislation. " 'Now, what're we gonna *do*?' If you want to stay away from him, it'll be because *you* want to."

He got on the subject of Bush's biggest legislative failure as governor, which was also his most ambitious effort—an overhaul of the Texas tax code in 1997. "We passed that bill," Stiles said, meaning the House. "We had some on the far left that voted no, and some on the far right that voted no. But you had the broad middle that were for it." Here he spread out his huge hands as far apart as they would go, to indicate the breadth of the broad middle. "The bill died in the Senate, and, quite frankly, it was the Republican senators who let him down. It came down to Republican senators who didn't want to have to explain why they voted for a tax bill. They were more concerned with the lobby"—a Texas term denoting all business lobbyists collectively—"than with the schoolchildren of Texas and the Texas economy. I was in Bush's office with Paul Sadler"—another Democratic House member, who was the sponsor of the tax bill—"when he was lobbying the last senator. She"—Florence Shapiro, a Republican from Dallas—"finally said, 'I'm not gonna drink that Kool-Aid, Governor.' Bush just ducked his head and said, 'Then there's nothing I can do.' She left. Then he turned to us and said, 'I guess I'm in a heck of a shape, if you two guys are the best friends I've got in this Capitol.' "

Later, Sadler managed to pass a much smaller version of Bush's tax bill, saving face for the Governor. Bush arranged for the signing ceremony to take place not in his office but in Stiles's home town. The following year, Bush did not openly endorse Sadler in his reëlection bid, but he did everything short of that, including declining to campaign for his Republican opponent, saying nice things about Sadler in public, and going to Sadler's house, in the out-of-the-way East Texas hamlet of Henderson, to participate in a ceremony. Indeed, Bush, whose popularity in Texas was a potent political weapon, would not campaign against any incumbent Democratic legislator who had been reasonably supportive of him—even people targeted by the Texas Republican Party, and even at a time when a switch of only four seats would have made a Republican majority in the House. He attended a fund-raiser for Pete Laney, the Democratic House Speaker, at which he came to the dais and gave Laney a hug in front of the assembled lobbyist-politician class of Texas. On a trip to El Paso, he attended an event at a state office building with a Democratic legislator named Norma Chavez, even though there were anti-NAFTA protesters, and television cameras, present. Once when he was holding a press conference, he spotted a Democratic legislator named Steve Wolens in the back of the room. "Woolie!" he exclaimed, walked over to give him a hug, and then returned to the microphone.

Is this an act that Bush can take on the road, if he winds up as President? The difficulties are obvious, above and beyond the narrowness of the election and the poisonousness of the aftermath. Bush didn't end the partisan bickering in Austin, as he proposes to do in Washington—there was no partisan bickering to begin with. The Washington press culture is far more intrusive than its Austin equivalent; in particular, there is no real Texas version of the weekend talk shows that merchandise strong opinions by both journalists and politicians and serve to magnify every conflict. Bush's style in Texas depended on an informal atmosphere that doesn't exist in Washington (without exception, the stories I heard from Texas Democrats about their pleasant dealings with Bush involved his physically touching them), and on a conservative political consensus that doesn't exist there, either. When, occasionally, national issues that didn't involve the business climate penetrated Texas airspace, the Bush style was notably less successful: he did not cut a deal in the legislature on a hate-crimes bill.

Glen Maxey, of Austin, the self-described most liberal member of the Texas Legislature, who is gay, told me this story about himself and Bush during a conversation on gay adoption (Bush's staff denies the story): "George Bush came up to me on the floor. He put his hands on my shoulders. We were almost nose to nose. He said, 'I respect you as a person. I want you to know, Glen, that what I say about gay people publicly doesn't apply to you personally.' So I put *my* hands on *his* shoulders and said, 'Governor, when you say a gay person is not fit to be a parent, you're talking about me and that is personal.' I don't think you get to settling violence in the Mideast by saying, 'I think you're a nice guy.' "

But it's too easy to say that because the Texas style can't be imported to Washington intact any attempts Bush makes to end the partisan bickering are bound to fail. It all depends on what the meaning of "partisan bickering" is.

A liberal who hears the phrase "partisan bickering" might have these associations: Newt Gingrich . . . Kenneth Starr . . . Tom DeLay . . . impeachment . . . Whitewater . . . health-care reform. You get the idea. Not so a conservative like Bush. The other day, Gingrich appeared in Washington for the unveiling of his official portrait in the Capitol. He delivered a few remarks—including, of course, a call for an end to partisan bickering. You could tell that he was trying to be evenhanded, as he carefully called upon one side to change in this way and the other to change in that way, but then he brought up the end-of-campaign anti-Bush television ads, produced by the N.A.A.C.P., that evoked the murder of James Byrd by Texas racists, and lost the balance. "If we decide," he said, "to mobilize our bases by the most ruthless kind of hateful partisanship, and I would suggest that some of the ads we saw in the last ten days of the campaign were stunning in their viciousness on the other side, and should be unacceptable in a decent society . . . then we will have a very painful period until we find a way . . . to have one side overwhelm the other." Whoops! What this made clear, and conversations with other Republicans do, too, was that "partisan bickering" brings to mind an entirely different set of associations for conservatives than it does for liberals. To conservatives, Bill Clinton, who plays to liberals as a centrist and conciliator, is the most partisan President ever.

In the House of Representatives, Republicans had built up a large reservoir of bitterness during the forty years of uninterrupted Democratic control of that body; and from the Republican point of view the Democrats maintain an oppressive majority control over the country's cultural and intellectual life. That someone as confrontational as Newt Gingrich was able to become the leader of the House Republicans is a sign of how frustrated they were. In 1994, Gingrich's reorientation of the Republicans toward national, ideological issues, through the Contract with America, meant that Republicans in Congress finally found out what it felt like to chair committees. And then, in 1995 and 1996, when the Republicans were prepared to set the tone of national politics, Clinton outfoxed them. When the Republicans tried to slow the future growth in Medicare, Clinton and the Democrats mounted a national television advertising campaign accusing them of wanting to cut benefits. Clinton packaged his crime and education bills in such a

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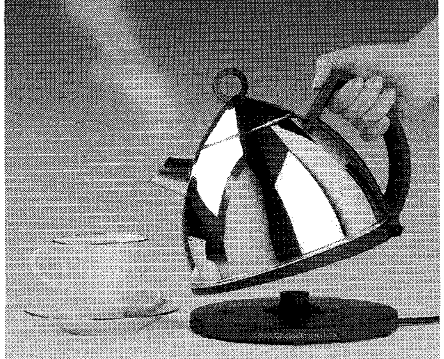

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WHY, IT'S AS PRETTY AS A PICTURE

A shallow thinker, I'm tuned
to the music of things,
The conversation of birds in the dusk-damaged trees,
The just cut grass in its chalky moans,
The disputations of dogs, night traffic, I'm all ears
To all this and half again.

And so I like it out here,
Late spring, off-colors but firming up, at ease among half things.
At ease because there is no overwhelming design
I'm sad heir to,
At ease because the dark music of what surrounds me
Plays to my misconceptions, and pricks me, and plays on.

It is a kind of believing without belief that we believe in,
This landscape that goes
no deeper than the eye, and poises like
A postcard in front of us
As though we'd settled it there, just so,
Halfway between the mind's eye and the mind, just halfway.

And yet we tend to think of it otherwise. Tonight,
For instance, the wind and the mountains and half moon talk
Of unfamiliar things in a low familiar voice,
As though their words, however small, were putting the world in place
And they are, they are,
the place inside the place inside the place.

The postcard's just how we see it, and not how it is.
Behind the eye's the other eye,
and the other ear.
The moonlight whispers in it, the mountains imprint upon it,
Our eyelids close over it,
Dawn and the sunset radiate from it like Eden.

—*Charles Wright*

way as to make fiscally cautious Republicans appear to be people who didn't want America to have a hundred thousand new teachers and a hundred thousand new policemen. After complaining about the excesses of ethics investigations of himself, Clinton said nothing when his allies on Capitol Hill filed eighty-three separate ethics charges against Gingrich during his term as Speaker. Clinton signed a Republican welfare-reform bill he had previously vetoed and piously criticized, and then, when it turned out to be popular, claimed all the credit for it. The Republicans managed to get Democratic votes for bills like the ban on partial-birth abortion and the abolition of the estate tax, and Clinton vetoed them anyway. He always seemed to win. He never seemed to pay the price for anything.

By Bush's lights, simply by not being Clinton one would have gone a good way toward a successful, nationally healing Presidency. There has always been about Bush's campaign the feeling that our having a decent, straightforward man (him) in the White House would be a milestone in America's progress. In other words, the bar is set fairly low. Bush repeatedly said during the campaign, "I want to do a few things and do them well." That was when he thought he would break the Presidential race open at the end. Given the conditions under which he would take office now, the natural move for Bush, never one to drive himself, would be to try to do even fewer things and to do them pretty well, and always to settle for whatever he could get in his dealings with Congress. A pleasant, forthright demeanor, a few appointments of Democrats to the Cabinet, a few of the kind of work-the-room social events at the White House at which Bush excels, with Democrats invited, the achievement of a modest legislative agenda consisting chiefly of items that Congress has already passed by good margins and that Clinton vetoed, and Bush could claim victory over partisan bickering.

Or Bush could end the partisan bickering in a more aggressive, ambitious, and clever way: he could simply declare all disagreement with him to be partisan bickering. Partisan, finally, means disagreeing with the establishment position; if you can make yourself into the establishment, you get to redefine the terms, so that whatever your opponents want becomes partisan. Gore, who is anything but easygoing, and who tends to chess-move his way through situations, could easily do the same thing, defining partisanship differently, of course. The point is that either man, upon assuming office in inescapably bitter circumstances, and feeling cheated by the other party, could find a way to be officially horrified by partisan bickering, without actually having to govern as a warm, outreaching moderate. Couldn't he?

I put this question to Grover Norquist, the conservative lobbyist and organizer (officially, the head of Americans for Tax Reform), who by reputation is pretty much Mr. Partisan Bickering, not long ago at his office in Washington. "Partisan bickering," Norquist said, equivocally, as if sampling a wine from his cellar that he thought might have turned. "In focus groups and polls, people tell you they want stuff done without bickering. It's not meaningful. When the Democrats controlled Congress, their definition of bipartisanship was when the Republicans caved. They say bipartisanship when they really mean submit."

But then Norquist got to thinking. He had been a terrible problem for President George H. W. Bush—probably the loudest among the many conservatives who criticized Bush for raising taxes. George W. Bush, however, had convinced Norquist that he is a genuine movement conservative, and so was spared the guerrilla tactics that Norquist had used on his old man, like demanding that he publicly sign a pledge never to raise taxes. Now Norquist expects to see the beginnings of another conservative revolution, in which case Bush's attacks on partisan bickering might not carry the same let's-split-the-difference implication that made Norquist suspicious of bipartisanship in the past. "I suppose the Republicans can say now, 'Do it our way, stop bickering,'" he said, obviously playing with a new idea, and obviously liking it better and better the more he played with it. "'Bickering is when you oppose our initiatives. When we win and the other team's dead, then there's no bickering. We are going to crush you guys. We are going to make you irrelevant.'" At this thought, he brightened. "But Bush can't say that. It would probably seem too aggressive." ♦

Sometimes even an oracle can't predict the future.
THE ONLY THING DRY IS THE INK.
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SHOUTS & MURMURS

"THE BOOK OF DIRECTIONS"

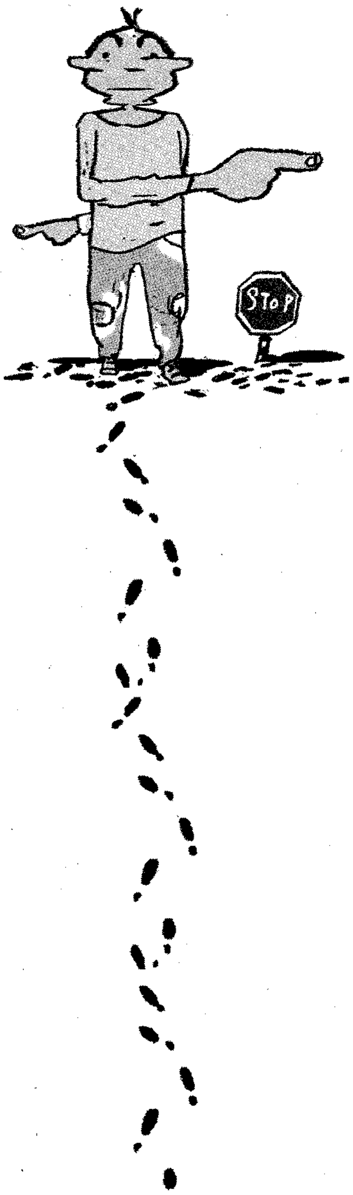
BY STEVE MARTIN

"The Book of Directions" takes a much needed look at the oral tradition of direction-giving. It opens enchantingly, hooking the reader with this simple but elegant example: "Go two blocks down the street, make a left, turn right at the light, and you'll see the sign."

That direction is quickly followed up with an even more compelling gem: "Go straight up the street about a block, and it's on the left." Both these examples not only are breathtakingly clear but ring with the haiku of modern direction-giving and entice the reader into the hidden mysteries of oral routing.

The author of "The Book of Directions," the French hothead Pierre Trout, found his inspiration after visiting America several years ago. In his preface he writes, "I was impressed with the American proclivity for giving directions. In France we do not do it, especially for tourists trying to speak French, who cannot seem to understand that the imperfect subjunctive of the verb 'être' is 'fusse' and not 'soit.' " The author recounts inquiring about the location of the Plaza Hotel. Expecting a rebuff, he was perplexed when a courteous cabbie actually pointed in the direction of the hotel, saying, "It's right over there." Mr. Trout observed that the expression not only was useful in that instance but was also a generally good direction that could function in many circumstances. "Of course, 'It's right over there' is useless unless accompanied by a finger point or a head gesture," the author writes, "but sometimes I use it without any gestures at all, which is beautifully confounding for foreigners. It's not as poetic as, say, 'Make two lefts and a right,' but it's a very functional form. What I love about 'Make two lefts and a right' is that, besides having a natural cadence that makes it fun to say, it is also extremely utilitarian and is a phrase that every potential direction-giver should memorize, along with its controvert, 'Make two rights and a left.' "

Mr. Trout offers informative chapters on historic directions ("They're right across the Delaware") and outrageously humorous directions ("If you're under water, you've gone too far"), and along the way he defines baffling slang ("Make a U-ey"). But he spends much time, perhaps too much, on directions involving landmarks. Mr. Trout loves the colloquial, and he starts his chapter on landmark-related directions with this example: "Ya go down to where the old barbershop was, and you stay on that road till you pass the Burpee sign. Make a right at the intersection where old Jimmy Delong spontaneously combusted." Mr. Trout points out that the above direction is very specific, and perhaps not useful in the Balkans or the French West Indies.



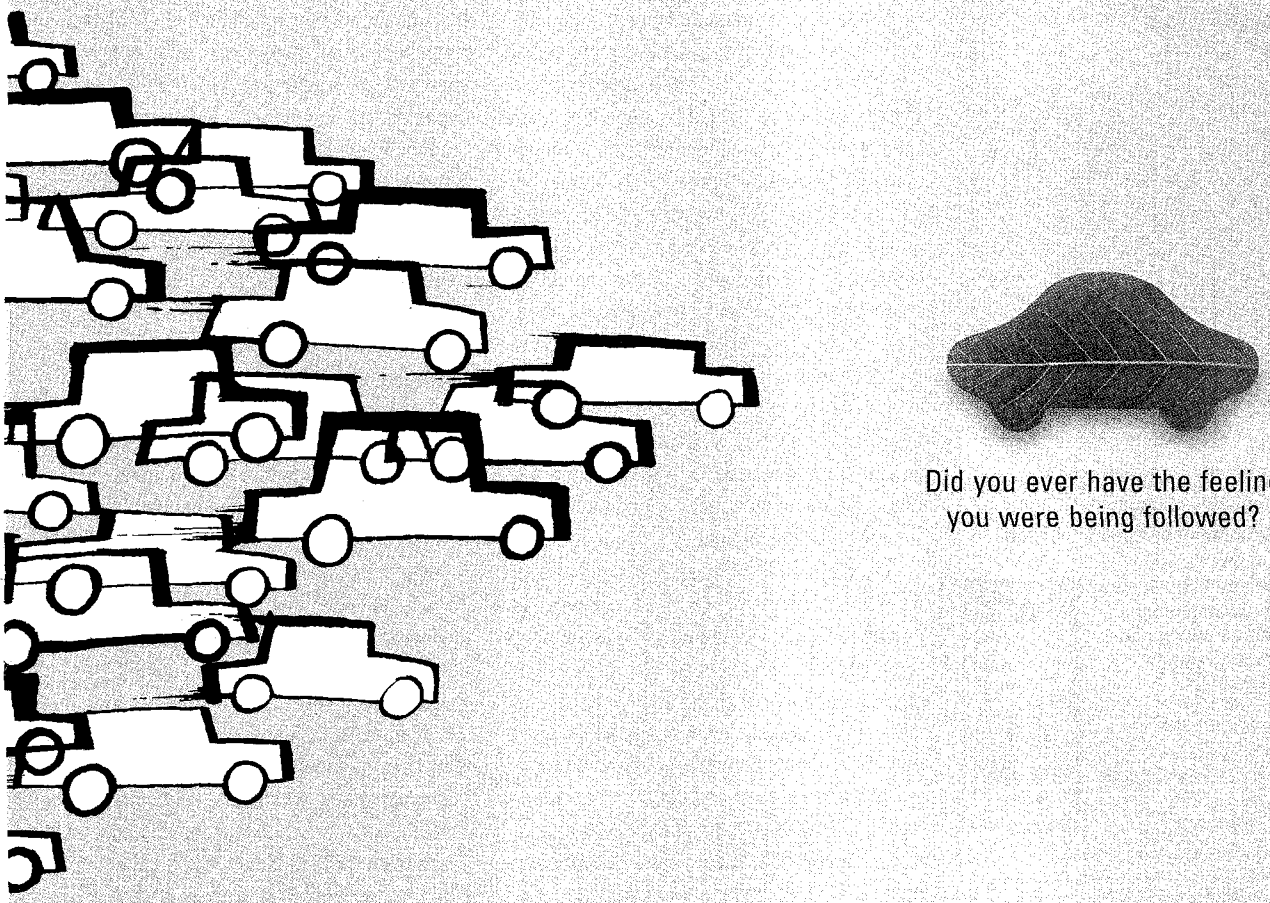
ISTVAN BANYAI

Consider this landmark-filled but more practical direction that was given by a Woman of Means to a member of the B.P.O.E. who was futilely searching for Westminster Abbey in Mr. Trout's home city of Paris.

Woman of Means (*makes expulsion-of-air sound through lips*): Westminster Abbey is in London. (*Then, in French and under her breath*) I can't believe that my important day is being interrupted by this concho-belt-wearing cowpoke. Doesn't he understand that my husband is the textile king? (*Resuming, in English*) You go up the Champs-Élysées, turn left at the Louvre, go to the Gare du Nord, and board the Chunnel for London. (*Back to French*) Am I not wonderful? Do I not have the perkiest ass in all of Gaul?

"American directions are the greatest of all," Mr. Trout writes in a chapter devoted to the subject. " 'Head on straight for about a mile' pops into my mind immediately. I've used it countless times even when the destination is not straight on about a mile, just because of its meter. I prefer a direction to be beautiful, and I could care less about its accuracy. And nobody really minds. I never hear from them again. After all, everything is straight on about a mile from somewhere."

This book is a welome addition to any reference library. It is the perfect companion to "Un-True Intersections of the United States: When American Streets Cross at Greater Than Ninety Degrees." "Directions" is available now at your local bookstore. Go out your door, make a right at the light. The bookstore is on your left. If you're under water, you've gone too far. ♦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LETTER FROM HUDSON FALLS

THE RIVER

Will the E.P.A. finally make G.E. clean up its PCBs?

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

In June of 1968, a three-year-old girl arrived at Kyushu University Hospital, in Fukuoka City, Japan, with an acute, acne-like skin condition. Both of her parents and an older sister, it turned out, were similarly afflicted; over the next several months, three hundred and twenty-five more people in the Fukuoka Prefecture were found to have the same symptoms. Nine were pregnant women. Two of their babies were stillborn; the rest had skin that was stained brown, or, as the local doctors described it, "cola-colored." The illness was soon traced to a brand of cooking oil that had been inadvertently contaminated by polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs. News of the outbreak was slow to reach the United States, but when it did it seemed to confirm what some researchers had already begun to suspect about the safety of the chemical.

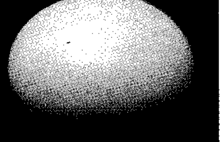
PCBs, which were first manufactured in this country in 1929, are made by combining two attached benzene rings with up to ten atoms of chlorine. They come in the form of a clear, viscous liquid, are relatively easy to produce, and exhibit many handy properties. They do not readily oxidize or react with acids or other chemicals, and they do not conduct electricity. For more than forty years, they were widely used as an insulating material in electrical equipment, like capacitors and transformers. They were also added to lubricants, hydraulic fluids, paints, and pesticides.

But what makes PCBs so useful—their stability—also makes them problematic. Once released into the environment, they can take decades to break down, and when they do the result can be a new compound that is equally dangerous. PCBs are lipophilic, meaning that animals who ingest them store them in fat cells, and they bioaccumulate, meaning that they become more concentrated as they move up the food chain. Just by eating meat or fish or drinking milk, we are ingesting PCBs, and virtually all of us have what is known in public-health circles as a "body burden" of the chemical, which, at least for those under fifty or so, probably began building up in utero. Unfortunately, one of the most efficient ways the human body gets rid of PCBs is via breast milk.

PCB levels in food were first regulated in the United States in the early nineteen-seventies, because it was suspected that in high doses the chemical caused cancer. Today, the Environmental Protection Agency categorizes PCBs as a "probable human carcinogen." Among public-health experts, though, the concern is increasingly about the risk that even low levels of PCBs may pose to fetal development. One of the earliest studies of this topic, begun in the nineteen-eighties, was carried out by Joseph and Sandra Jacobson, researchers at Wayne State University. The Jacobsons followed children of women who consumed fish from Lake Michigan, testing the children as infants, at age four, and at age eleven. They found that those who had had the greatest in-utero exposure to PCBs tended to have lower I.Q.s and lower reading scores than their peers. Recently, studies carried out in the Netherlands and in New York appear to confirm the relationship between prenatal PCB exposure and learning problems.

Dr. Walter Rogan, an epidemiologist at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, who has also studied the effects of the chemical on children, pointed out to me that the difference between the PCB levels in the blood of mothers who would be considered highly exposed and those whose exposure would be considered ordinary was relatively tiny, measured in parts per billion. When I told him I was glad I had been unaware of my own level of PCB exposure during my two

BEN KATCHOR



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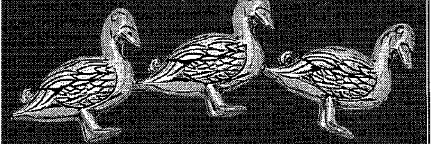

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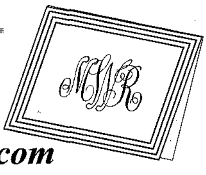

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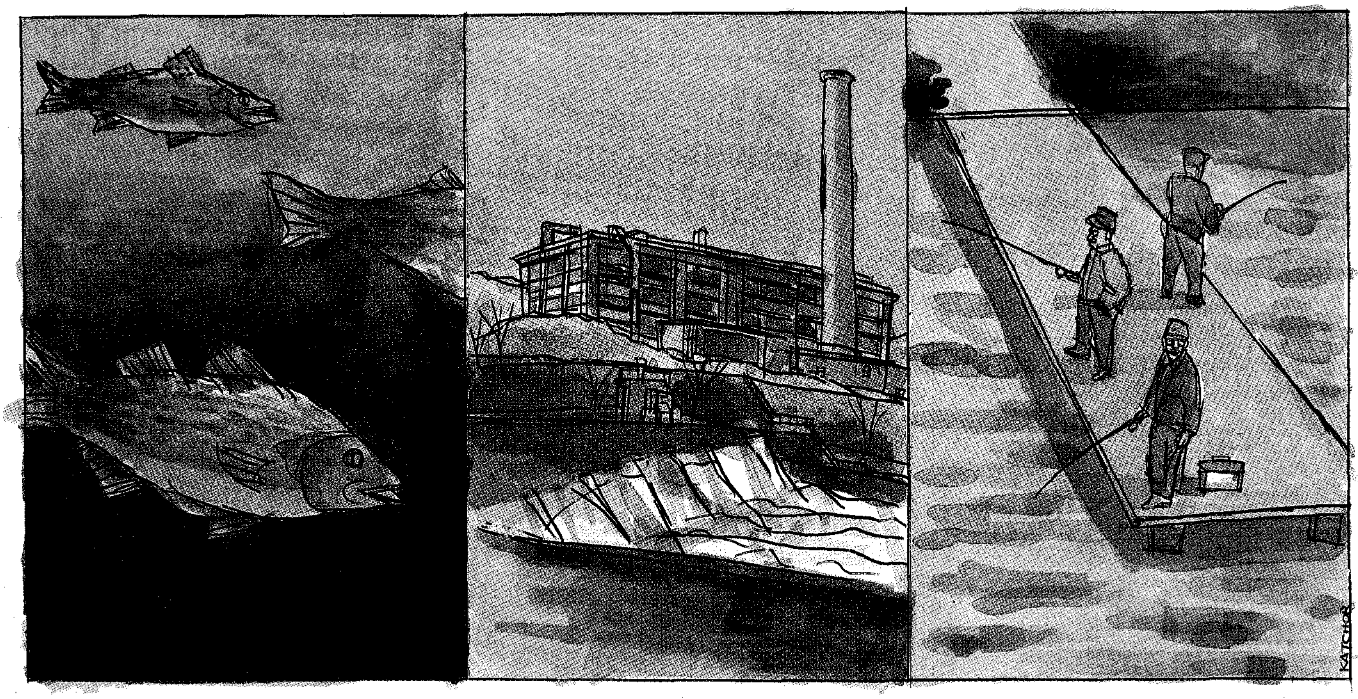
pregnancies, he assured me, "You don't want to know."



One slogan goes, "A river runs through it." A town booster explains, "We didn't want to say, 'A Superfund site runs through it.' "

In New York State, the biggest consumer—and discarder—of PCBs has been the General Electric Corporation, which operated a pair of capacitor plants a mile or so apart on the Hudson River north of Albany. G.E. stopped dumping PCBs into the river in 1977, when they were outlawed, but over the previous thirty years more than a million pounds of the chemical washed into the river from the two factories, one in the town of Hudson Falls and the other in Fort Edward. Two hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds more was left to seep directly into the ground.

While the bulk of these PCBs has by now been carried downriver by the current, the heaviest concentrations are still to be found close to home, in sediments deposited in the Hudson just south of Fort Edward. Fishing along this section of the river, and, indeed, all the way down to Troy, forty miles away, is permitted on a catch-and-release basis only. Along the shoreline, the state has posted signs that show a schematic fish on a schematic dinner plate with a big "X" through both. "Fish from these waters have high levels of chemical contaminants (PCBs) that may cause reproductive and developmental effects and cancer," the signs read.

The E.P.A. has been trying to figure out what to do about the contaminated sediments in the Hudson for nearly twenty years. One option is to order them to be dredged up, which would entail treating and disposing of thousands of tons of sludge. Another is simply to leave things as they are. In the last decade, the E.P.A. has put off the date for releasing its decision eleven times. All the while, according to the agency's own findings, the sediments have been leaking PCBs into the Hudson at a rate of hundreds of pounds a year.

The decision to dredge or not to dredge turns on a number of highly technical issues—among them the evolving hydrology of the river, the long-term behavior of organic chemicals, and the statistics of risk. Yet it is almost impossible to have followed the case for even a small part of its tortured history and still believe that science is, fundamentally, what is at issue.

Ecological disasters, by their very nature, involve many levels of complexity. This should be a strong argument for taking every precaution to prevent them from happening in the first place. After the fact, however, it is almost always possible to argue that more needs to be known—a circumstance that tends to favor those who, for whatever reason, prefer inaction. Dredging would cost G.E. hundreds of millions of dollars, and it would still leave the company open to claims from various government agencies, acting on behalf of the public, which could run to a billion.

Sometime in the next few weeks, the E.P.A. is scheduled, finally, to release its decision on the Hudson. It is expected that the agency will recommend dredging, and it is also expected that, far from marking the conclusion of the process, this will initiate a whole new, maddeningly protracted round of delays.

Not long ago, I arranged to take a tour of G.E.'s Hudson Falls operation. The capacitor plant is no longer functioning, and the only work going on at the site is toxic-waste cleanup. I had been told to report to a small building that once served as the plant office and is now the cleanup effort's headquarters. On my way in, I passed an illuminated plastic sign with the familiar G.E. logo on it and the motto "Working Every Day to Promote the Recovery of the Hudson River."

Inside, I was met by five representatives from G.E., including Stephen Ramsey, the company's vice-president for environmental issues; John Haggard, the director of the cleanup effort; and Mark Behan, a public-relations consultant. They were sitting in a large conference room whose only decoration was a cross-sectional map of the site taped to

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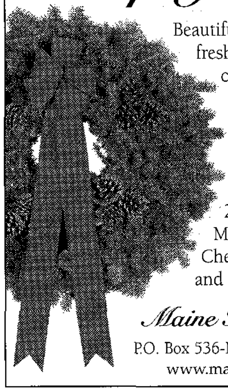

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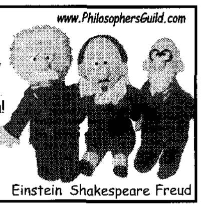

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the wall. Ramsey was clearly the most senior official there, and the others let him do most of the talking.

Ramsey wears rimless glasses and a gray beard and has a manner that is at once entirely relaxed and completely unyielding. For much of the Reagan Administration, he headed the environmental-enforcement unit of the United States Justice Department, yet, despite this experience, or perhaps because of it, he takes a dim view of government decision-making, especially as it concerns the Hudson.

Ramsey told me he was convinced that the E.P.A. was going to order an extensive dredging project. This was partly because word of a decision had begun to get out, and partly because he believed the agency to be biased toward dredging as a remedy. This bias, he argued, was structural. "The agency decided digging mud that was contaminated was a good thing because it showed action," he said. "It is not in the nature of large organizations to take a long time and spend a lot of money and conclude that nothing needs to be done."

After a while, we all put on hard hats and went to look around the site, which stretches over seventeen acres. The main structure is the old capacitor plant, a large, unprepossessing brick building that began its life as a paper-bag factory and sits seventy feet above the Hudson, on the top of a shale cliff. We descended several flights of wooden stairs and a set of catwalks festooned with Christmas lights to the ruins of an ancient paper mill. Underneath the mill is a long tunnel that, it was discovered several years ago, had been serving as a sort of collection system for PCBs that seeped from the capacitor plant into the bedrock. (This discovery was made, unfortunately, only after a wooden gate in the tunnel had broken and a large quantity of the PCBs trapped there had already washed into the river.) When we got to the tunnel, I saw several men wearing protective Tyvek suits working inside it.

Over the years, G.E. has offered various theories about the PCBs in the Hudson. Early on, the company posited that they were being broken down by microorganisms, though it has pretty much given up on this idea by now. More recently, it has argued that they are not a problem because they are being buried by clean sediment, and that, in any case, they don't pose a significant human health threat. "There is no credible evidence that PCBs cause cancer," the company wrote in a 1999 report.

G.E.'s latest theory is that it is the PCBs that washed out of the tunnel, and those that continue to seep out of the plant site, rather than the ones dumped prior to 1977, that are the ongoing source of contamination. This argument may seem self-defeating; G.E. is insisting that its own failure to clean up the site is, after twenty-five years, the main reason the river is still polluted. But at the core of the argument is a case for further delay. Ramsey explained it to me as follows: "Just in terms of common sense, in ordering how you would do a task, you don't try to clean up a spill on the floor until you turn the bottle back over and wipe the stuff off that's causing the puddle down below. And that, although perhaps somewhat of a homegrown analogy, is exactly the case here. Until and unless the source of PCBs is cut off, we feel quite strongly that you can't know whether dredging is unnecessary."

Of all the anti-dredging arguments Ramsey offered during my visit, I found the one about structural bias at the E.P.A. to be the most compelling. Even the agency acknowledges that the risks of dredging cannot be dismissed; the process could re-suspend chemicals that have remained buried, and damage the habitat that is the bottom of the river. It seemed to me entirely plausible, though, that the E.P.A., after fighting with G.E. for so long, would be loath to conclude that the best that could be achieved was the status quo. But when I asked what struck me as a pretty obvious follow-up question—what about the structural biases of G.E.?—Ramsey betrayed no recognition.

"We've not shied away from undertaking a lot of work, at a very high cost, particularly when we felt the work was justified," he said. "This is one in which we simply feel that the right thing to do is not to try to destroy the river to save it. All of the science here leads us to that conclusion."

Finally, I asked Ramsey how much time he thought would be needed to determine if the "spilled bottle" theory was, indeed, correct. He did not hesitate. The reasonable thing for the E.P.A. to do, he said, would be to hold off a decision for at least another five years.

The federal Superfund, created in 1980, was intended to finance the cleanup of orphan toxic-waste sites—those where the polluter either could not be identified or, perhaps, no longer existed. In cases where the responsible party was known, the Superfund law mandated that the polluter would bear the cost. The law has had many unintended consequences, one of which is to provide corporations that have the resources to pay for a cleanup with a motive to use them to fight the government instead.

Thanks to PCBs, the Hudson River from Hudson Falls all the way to New York Harbor, two hundred miles south, is a federal Superfund site. G.E. was legally identified as the responsible party back in 1983, and has since spent millions of dollars supporting scientific research that challenges the findings of the E.P.A. It is currently spending millions more on an ad campaign in the Hudson Valley, aimed, quite explicitly, at "sending a message" to the agency. "More and more people oppose dredging," one ad that pictures eight ordinary citizens asserts.

The list of lobbyists G.E. employs on Capitol Hill, meanwhile, is a long one. Among the stars are Republicans such as Bob Livingston, the former House Appropriations Committee chairman, and Democrats such as George Mitchell, the former Senate minority leader. For many years, Gerald Solomon, the former chairman of the House Rules Committee, represented the district that includes G.E.'s capacitor factories, and during that time his unstinting defense of the company earned him the nickname "the congressman from G.E." Solomon, too, is now on retainer.

At the urging of these lobbyists, G.E.'s allies in Congress, in each of the last few years, have attached anti-dredging "riders" to the bill containing the appropriations for the E.P.A., and they have ordered up four separate investigations of the agency's assessment of the Hudson by the General Accounting Office. They have also tried, unsuccessfully, to force the E.P.A. to shift authority over the decision from the New York regional office to the national headquarters, in Washington.

One effect of all these maneuvers has been to postpone the E.P.A.'s announcement of its recommendations until the final days of the Clinton Administration. This means that it will be left to the new Administration either to follow through on the recommendations or to reject them. Speaking on the floor during a fight over the most recent anti-dredging rider, Senator Frank Lautenberg, Democrat of New Jersey, said, "You know, one of these amendments is there because it is strongly supported by General Electric, an extremely powerful corporation." Such riders, he added, could best be described

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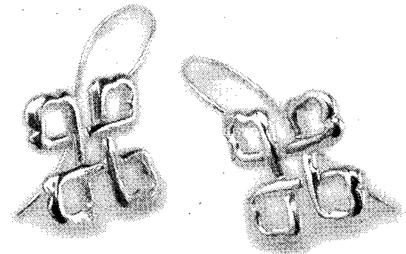

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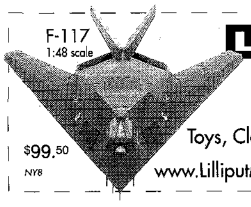

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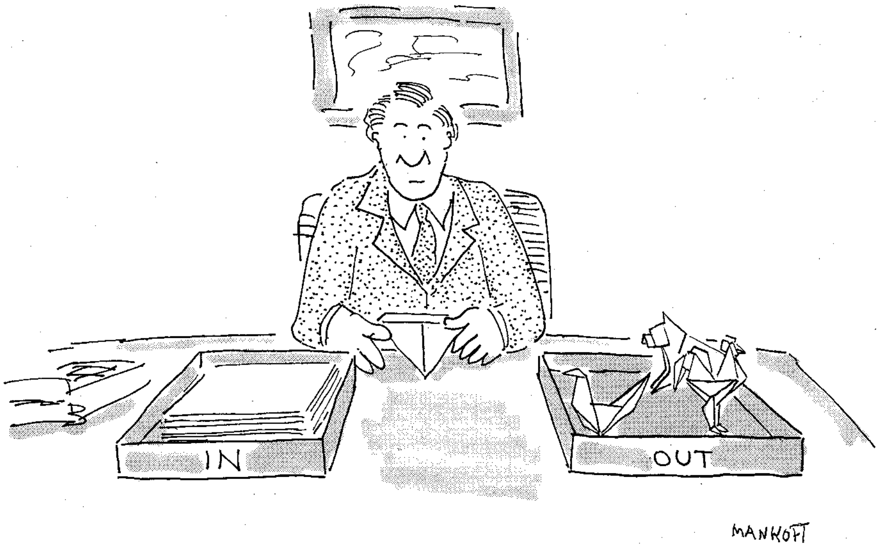

as "a delay of corporate responsibility."

PCB contamination destroyed commercial fishing on the Hudson, and it is the reason there is still a health advisory in effect. The advisory instructs young women and children to eat no fish caught below Hudson Falls, and urges everyone else to follow a series of complicated guidelines that fill two legal-size pages. Nevertheless, G.E.'s official posture toward the PCBs in the Hudson has always been unapologetic.

Jack Welch, who is G.E.'s chairman, was an up-and-coming vice-president when, in 1976, he was charged with representing the company in a set of negotiations with New York State over PCBs. It was the middle of New York's fiscal crisis, and G.E. reportedly threatened that, if pushed too hard, it would pull thousands of jobs out of the state. The settlement Welch engineered was immensely favorable to G.E.; the company paid just three million dollars, and the state—though not the federal government—gave up the option of holding G.E. responsible for a cleanup.

Now, as then, Welch portrays the company as blameless; a few years ago, he went so far as to upbraid a nun who had challenged him on this score at a stockholders' meeting. "Sister, you have to stop this conversation," Welch said. "You owe it to God to be on the side of truth here." Just this fall, in the middle of a generally glowing profile of him for "60 Minutes," Lesley Stahl asked Welch about the PCBs the company had dumped in the river. "The word 'dump' is used!" he exclaimed. "We didn't dump! We had a permit from the U.S. government and the State of New York to do exactly what we did. Do you think I'd come to work in a company that would do that or condone that? I wouldn't do it, Lesley! This is nuts!"

Even taking into account the high costs of research, advertising, and big-name lobbyists, by the logic of the Superfund it obviously makes good sense for G.E. to fight on. Any postponement delays the cost of a cleanup and further dissipates the general sense of urgency. Thanks to tighter pollution standards, the Hudson is, by many measures, cleaner than it has been in at least a generation, and, to the extent that PCBs continue to represent a risk, it is one that people along the river have already had to learn to live with. As New York State's Attorney General, Eliot Spitzer, put it to me, "What begins to happen is the offending party can say, 'You've survived this long. Why bother?' They become beneficiaries of their own delay."

Two years ago, the New York State Canal Corporation, a public agency, spent two million dollars to renovate the dock on the Hudson at Fort Edward. The new dock has a massive concrete wall, a gazebo, and signs that say "Welcome to the Historic Fort Edward Yacht Basin." It has room to accommodate up to two dozen pleasure boats at a time, which, these days, is two dozen more than are likely to show up.

Over the years, the basin has silted up to the point where, this past summer, the water was only three or four feet deep in spots. The Canal Corporation used to dredge the basin regularly, but has not done so since 1977, because of its reluctance to deal with the contaminated sediment.

In many of the towns along the Hudson, the damage from PCBs is diffuse and difficult to quantify; in Fort Edward, however, it is pretty straightforward. Not only have the boats stopped coming; a lot of people's lawns have been carted off to toxic-waste dumps. Residents used to draw their water from private wells, but in the nineteen-eighties a plume of PCBs migrating from the G.E. factory forced the town to install a municipal water system, at a cost of two million dollars. In 1995, at a peculiarly ungenerous moment, G.E. filed suit against the town, arguing that the property-tax bill for the plant was too high. It won, and the town was forced to refund it a hundred and twenty-three thousand dollars.

A few weeks ago, I went to visit Fort Edward and stopped by the local Chamber of Commerce, which is housed in a low-slung red building on a plot of land that was, until a recent cleanup, contaminated by oil spills. I had made an appointment to see the president of the chamber, Pamela Brooks, and she had invited along a friend of hers, Joanne Fuller, who is an amateur historian. When I arrived, the two women showed me around the main room of the building—a visitors' center, occupied mostly by a model of the original Fort Edward, an important English outpost in the French and Indian War. The model was constructed by Fuller's husband, Richard, out of hundreds of tiny logs.

Brooks is a large woman with a world-weary air; Fuller is trim, with red-tinted hair and a voice sanded down by too much cigarette smoke. Both are committed, in spite of the odds, to turning Fort Edward into a tourist destination. "We're Vermont without the drive," Brooks told me. At one point during my visit, she pulled out some promotional literature for the town with the title "A River Runs Through It." "We didn't want to say, 'A Superfund site runs through it,' " Fuller said. One

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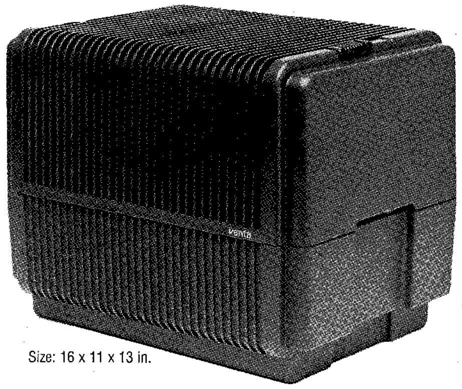

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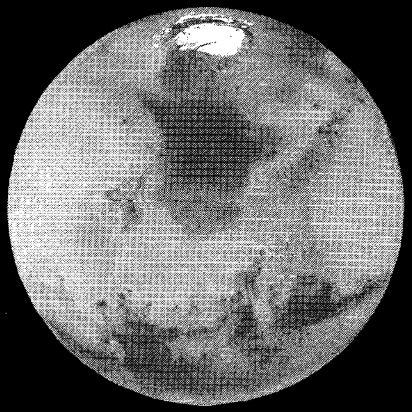

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of the schemes the two women told me they had entertained—in jest, I had to assume—was to report the sighting of a Loch Ness-type monster, grown huge and grotesque from feeding on PCBs.

The Fort Edward Chamber of Commerce has passed a resolution calling for dredging the Hudson for navigational purposes. It has remained neutral on the larger issue of dredging for environmental reasons, a topic so controversial in Fort Edward that it has split the town into two openly warring factions. (Just by coming out in favor of navigational dredging, the members of the chamber put themselves on the wrong side of the town supervisor, who subsequently informed them that they would be losing discretion over a five-thousand-dollar appropriation.) "We call ourselves hostages on the Hudson, and we feel ourselves that," Brooks said. Apparently not wanting to seem too defeatist, she added, "We are brave broads. We've talked about getting white suits and buckets, and going down there and saying 'If you aren't going to do it, then, by God, we will.' "

One of my visits upstate happened to coincide with a series of candlelight vigils sponsored by the environmental group Scenic Hudson. The group had picked forty spots along the river, one a park in downtown Hudson Falls. When I got there, about twenty-five people had gathered and were carrying around handwritten signs with slogans like "We Deserve a Clean River" and "Clean Up Your Mess!" There was also an information table, where copies of the fishing advisory were available, along with carp-shaped kitchen magnets bearing the State Health Department phone number and the message "Learn About Chemicals in the Fish You Catch."

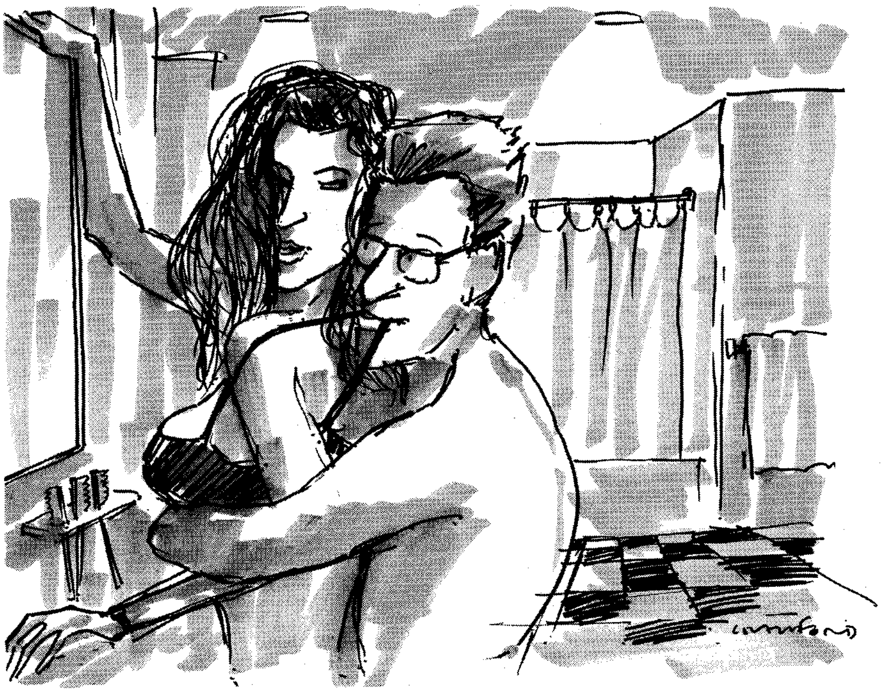
Right after I arrived, a group of counter-protesters materialized out of the darkness. Representing a group called CEASE—Citizen Environmentalists Against Sludge Encapsulation—the counter-protesters were carrying fancier, commercially printed placards that said, "EPA: We Oppose Dredging." In contrast to the young, slackerish crowd from Scenic Hudson, who had come for folk songs and reverie, the older, pillar-of-the-community types from CEASE were there to make noise. "You are so ignorant!" I heard one CEASE member yell at a woman from the other side. "Just go over there with your little friends." Another one said, "Listen, sister, you were probably in three-quarter pants when we started this fight."

Dredging, if it ever does occur, will be an unpleasant business. It will be noisy and disruptive, and the contaminated sludge that it produces will have to be disposed of somewhere. It is this last prospect, in particular, that worries people along the upper Hudson. There has been a fair bit of speculation—and not without justification—that the sludge will end up buried, or "encapsulated," close to the river, on land that is now somebody's dairy farm.

G.E. has done its best to feed these anxieties. Its current ad campaign includes a dozen different full-page spreads that have been run in rotation in newspapers like the Glens Falls *Post-Star* and the Schenectady *Daily Gazette*, and television commercials that are being aired out of Albany, Poughkeepsie, and Kingston. "Will this be the last dive for ten years?" reads one ad, which pictures a kid doing a cannonball into a river. Another shows a huge rig pulling sludge out of an unidentified waterway, and making a terrible mess. The caption reads, "You can be guaranteed dredging will be devastating. You can't be guaranteed it will work."

Even in the best-case scenario, dredging will not, of course, fully solve the PCB problem in the Hudson. By now, the chemical is so widely dispersed that there will always be traces of it in the river, no matter what is done. An argument could be made, on strictly environmental grounds, that there are more effective ways to spend several hundred million dollars. But in legal terms the options are extremely limited. G.E. can be compelled only to pay to clean up the pollution it dumped in the Hudson, not to fulfill some broader or more far-reaching notion of ecological justice.

The arrival of the CEASE crowd came as a surprise to the organizers of the candlelight vigil, who appeared genuinely dispirited by the hostility directed their way. First, they tried to argue that they were the only group with a permit to be in the park. Then, as the vigil degenerated into a shouting match, they challenged the anti-dredging protesters' motives. The CEASE people were adamant that they had nothing to do with G.E., even after someone from the opposing side pointed to a set of tiny letters on their signs, which, when viewed from up close, clearly read, "General Electric Corporation." ♦



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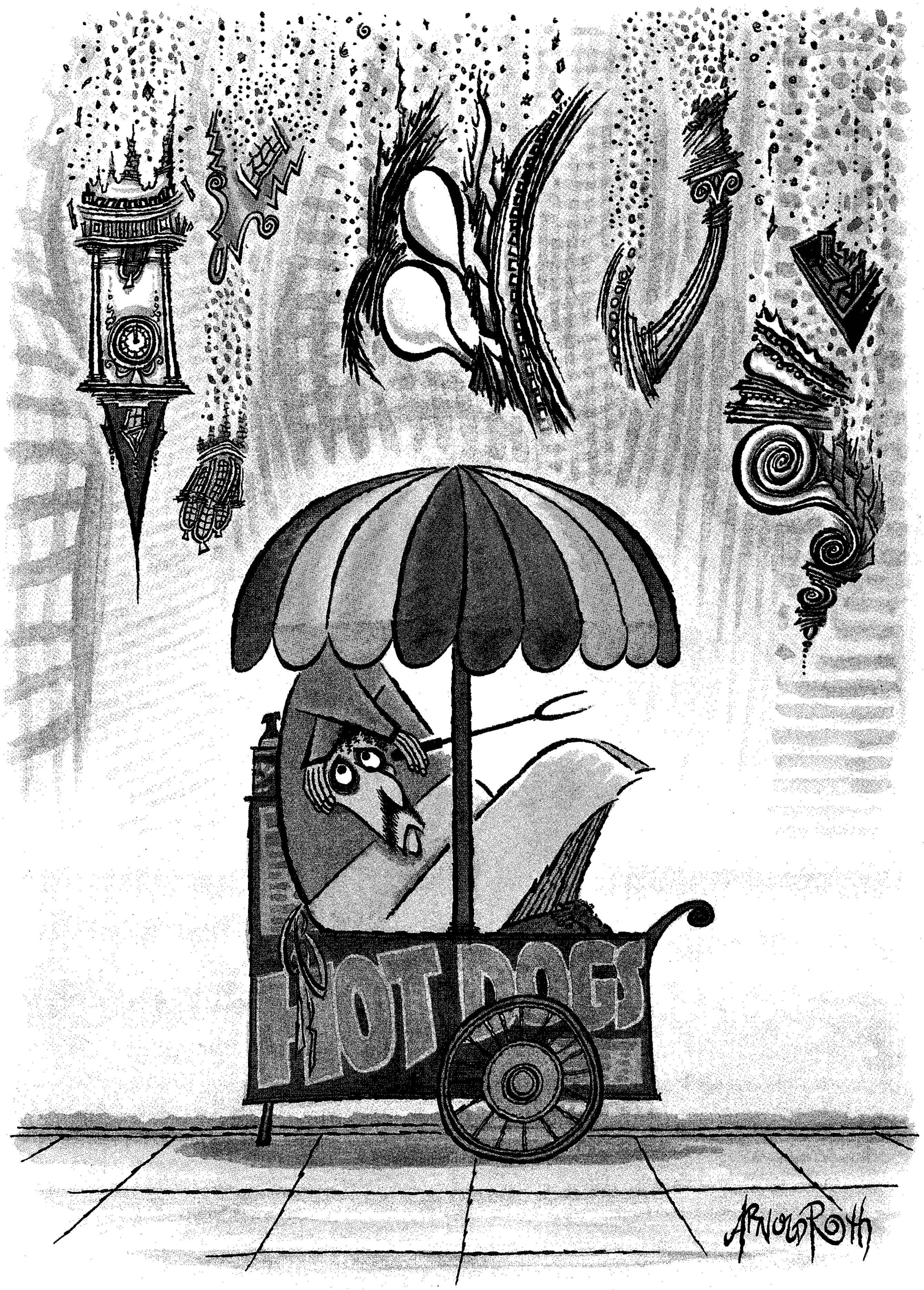

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BY BURKHARD BILGER

Timothy Lynch tends to have an unsettling effect on his surroundings. Five feet eight and a hundred and thirty-five pounds, with a featherweight's build and forearms like braided cables, he makes foundations quake and steel columns snap; scaffolds go up and walls come down wherever he goes. Today, high above lower Broadway, on the roof of a Dutch Revival loft building, Lynch leans out across a parapet and points to a patch of banger-blue roof tiles weathered a blotchy gray. "That's got my name written all over it," he says. Twelve stories below, shoppers and tourists throng the sidewalks of SoHo, eyes fixed forward, feet scurrying toward Dean & DeLuca and Armani Exchange. No one notices the tiles suspended above, their chipped and jagged edges steeply raked toward the street. "Those were probably put in a hundred years ago," Lynch says. "Who the hell knows what's keeping them there?"

Lynch is a structural engineer with Robert Silman Associates, Manhattan's premier restoration engineering firm, so he is accustomed to such misfortunes in the making. In the past six years alone, he has helped repair more than six hundred buildings and his firm has worked on seven thousand, including Carnegie Hall, City Hall, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The New York climate is tough on buildings, he says, and it gets more punishing the higher up you go. "These parapets are really taking it in the teeth," he goes on. "In the fall, the prevailing northwest winds hit them and go over the capstones, sending water into the brick and mortar. Then, in the summer, the winds shift to the southwest and you get a Bermuda high." Lynch reaches over and peels a piece of brick from the wall as if it were a crust of bread. "This is gone, and the rest are crumbling," he says. "And the roof beam is corroding, making the wall go out of plane." Then he surveys the rest of the roof. "And here's the real problem: everything is coming on-line at the same time—that roof and these walls and that rusted shed over there. And the owner has to go a hundred and fifty feet up to fix it."

Cities rise in great, ragged waves—in surging tides of prosperity and sudden swells of speculation—and they tend to fall in waves. Nowhere is that pattern more apparent than in New York. Much of the city was erected in the early nineteen-hundreds, when steel-frame architecture was in its infancy, and many of the buildings from that period are now faltering from old age. (Chicago, the only older modern city, has far fewer early skyscrapers.) At the same time, skyscrapers from the fifties and sixties, with their fragile curtain walls, are suffering their first major failures. Those two waves of decay, washing to varying degrees over nine hundred thousand buildings, are turning New York into a city of scaffolds. I know a structural engineer from Oklahoma who glanced around anxiously on his first visit and said, "Half of this city is below code."

Having finished with his inspection, Lynch dusts off his hands and looks out across the skyline. An Atlantic breeze has swept the air so clear that you can see the far shore of the Hudson, where semis creep up the New Jersey Turnpike. From the cast-iron lofts of SoHo to the gleaming spires of midtown, up the spine of Manhattan to the distant smudge of Harlem, the sun seems to catch every cornice and pediment, every sway-backed brownstone and tattered tenement. "Now let's look at how many repair campaigns we can see from here that are already under way," Lynch says, and sends his index finger leaping from rooftop to rooftop. "That skylight over there, that's one. That water tower is two. Those men crawling around over there, that's three . . ." Within a minute, he's up to twenty, and my eyes are picking up the telltale signs: the sandbags and piles of rigging, bright-blue tarps and blaze-orange netting snapping in the wind. "And that's not counting all these equally old buildings around them," he says. "That's thousands of linear feet of cornices and windows and façades, all needing repair or preservation campaigns."

Listening to Lynch, and following the sweep of his arm above the city, it's possible to be either encouraged or dismayed. Structural engineering is a glass-half-full, glass-half-empty sort of profession, and Lynch is a master of its double-edged clichés. His typical spiel to a building owner, after half an hour of poking at rusted beams and failing walls, begins, "Nothing here that can't be fixed." He talks cheerily of "sacrificial" building elements and deterioration that's "well within the range of normal," and his clipped Irish brogue—he grew up in Dublin—can make even the worst news dance a jig. In one way, those scaffolds are proof only of the city's astonishing wealth and the skyrocketing value of its real estate. After decades of neglect, landlords are finally fixing up their buildings. Yet the underlying fact remains: the city is full of scaffolds because so much of it is falling apart.

For a tall building to stand, it needs a stout frame, strong walls, and a solid foundation. To remain standing, it needs more subtle qualities. A skyscraper has to expand and contract evenly with the seasons; hold firm or flex gracefully with sudden gusts and sheer winds; ride out minor tremors with barely a twitch. Most of all, perhaps, it has to stay dry. Steel beams, riveted into an immensely powerful skeleton, are the great nineteenth-century innovation that allowed buildings to rise easily above six stories, but they can also be a skyscraper's greatest weakness. The acres of stone that encase a typical high-rise building absorb thousands of gallons of rain in a heavy storm. If that water works its way

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behind the façade, it can reduce the strongest building to rubble and rust.

By today's standards, the first steel-frame structures were built like powder houses. No one knew what the exact stresses on a ten-story building were, so architects pencilled in heavy masonry partitions, steel beams, and cast-iron columns. Yet such powerful frames often had friable skins. Brick, terra cotta, mortar, and steel were bound tightly together in the façade, all flexing and stiffening to differing degrees, pushing and pulling one another as the elements played upon them. A hundred-foot-high terra-cotta wall might expand by as much as an inch on a hot summer day, and never shrink back entirely. Over time, the wall would buckle against its steel brackets, building up pressures as high as four thousand pounds per square inch. When restoration of the Woolworth Building began, in 1977—sixty-four years after the structure was completed—its terra-cotta tiles exploded as they came off.

"A lot of these problems just weren't understood," Lynch says. "People didn't know these buildings would last this long, so they just said, Oh, let them deal with it later on." More often than not, their worst oversight was the potential for water damage. Engineers hadn't yet divined how water trickles through a high-rise façade, so they made poor use of internal flashing, cavities, and weep holes. Every season, some water would seep into the façade and stay there, causing the bricks to swell a little. Every winter, that water would freeze and expand by ten per cent, opening hairline cracks that let in still more rain. Eventually, the cracks grew so deep that water reached the steel beams.

By the nineteen-fifties and sixties, engineers had refined the mathematics of stress, metallurgists had developed tough new building materials, and architects had better strategies for keeping steel dry. But every advantage seemed to entail a deeper disadvantage. The new façades were hung in prefabricated curtain-wall panels, separated from the frame by a cavity, but they were more decorative than structural, and even more vulnerable to temperature swings. Steel could now bear thirty-six thousand pounds per square inch—ten to twenty per cent more than was the case before the Second World War—and its quality was far more consistent. But engineers, emboldened by their new equations, designed thinner frames, which could bear a building's load but not much more. An older structure like the Empire State Building had so many crutches to lean on, so much structural redundancy, that it barely shook when a B-25 bomber crashed into it, in 1945. By contrast, the Gulf & Western Building, erected on Columbus Circle in 1970, swayed so much in high winds that board members had to hold on to their chairs during meetings.

"He turns out not to be Italian—just Italianate."

In a sense, builders had lost faith in posterity. They had seen New York's brownstones give way to mansions and these give way to luxury apartments—each more lavish and more short-lived than the last—and Europe's finest cities bombed to rubble. So they designed for thirty-year maintenance cycles rather than for a century. In his recent book, "The Creative Destruction of Manhattan," Max Page, a Yale historian, quotes the editors of the magazine *Architecture*, writing in 1927: "The great steel frames of [New York's] structures will never disintegrate from rust. They are scrapped before rust can start." Yet neither the frenzied real-estate market of the twenties nor the slum clearance and highway building of the fifties and sixties could do away with all of New York's older buildings. And soon they began to rust—and crumble—after all.

In the seventies, with Wall Street in the doldrums and government nearly bankrupt, the city entered an era of deferred maintenance. Landlords, dependent on shrinking rent rolls, left maintenance to tenants and safety to chance. When they did make repairs, they often made them badly, sandblasting masonry until its protective crust was gone, spraying on newfangled sealers, repointing façades with hard mortars that compressed bricks until their surfaces flaked off. "We just weren't prepared to take care of these buildings," Peg Breen, the president of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, says. "For every problem that comes with natural age, there are a dozen more that come with improper repairs." Or, as Lynch puts it, "Half the things people think are accidents are anything but."

In 1979, the inevitable happened. A Barnard College student, walking under a building in Morningside Heights owned by the university, was struck in the head by a terra-cotta balcony bracket. She died instantly, and in dying changed the face of the city.

"Ah, there's a beauty," Lynch declares one windy morning. "That's what we're after." We're standing on a scaffold along the top of an old derelict morgue, near the East River, that's being gutted and restored by the city. Lynch points to a terra-cotta ornament much like the one that fell on the Barnard student, then reaches up and casually snaps off a corner. "That little shit is most of what you get in New York." Shaped like the point of a prehistoric spear, the fragment has a molded ridge down its spine and flutings on its underside. "A little piece like this will reach about fifty miles an hour by the time it hits the concrete," Lynch says. "If it weighs three pounds, it'll produce an impact of at least two hundred pounds."

Terra cotta is made from weathered and burnt clays, finer than those in brick, which are fired at more than two thousand degrees Fahrenheit. (In Italian, *terra cotta* means "cooked earth.") It's fire resistant, easy to color and mold, and lighter and less expensive than carved stone; it's also more brittle, more absorbent, and weaker than stone. For much of human history, terra cotta has been a godsend to builders. But in New York, where it was used on thousands of neoclassical hulks like this one between 1880 and 1930, its vices have come to outweigh its virtues. "These ornaments are just eye candy," Lynch says, tossing the fragment aside. "No structural purpose at all. They're just stuck on the outside with a bit of steel, so they're inclined to come down." Rosettes and decorative brackets are often the first to go, their edges chipping like the rim of a glass, but cornices are the greater hazard.

Lynch points to a pair of rusted beams that jut from a corner at right angles to support the building's cornice. "These are our old friends the steel outriggers," he says. "When this was built, in 1908, everything was as tight as a clam, so the builders walked away from it and the owners deferred maintenance for eighty years. What the builders didn't forecast was the roof leaking, and the leaders getting clogged with a dead pigeon and then filling up and overflowing. Pretty soon, the whole cornice was saturated and the steel was encased in a reservoir. That's when you got the rusting." He reaches over and rubs one of the beams between his thumb and forefinger, showering reddish-brown flakes to the ground until only a paper-thin wedge of steel remains. "I'd guess this was already fairly far gone ten or fifteen years ago," he says. In July, a twenty-five-pound ornament came loose from a building on Seventh Avenue at Thirty-third Street, dropped fourteen stories, and fractured a tourist's skull. "What's the first thing that should come to mind when you see terra cotta?" Lynch concludes, turning to me with a cockeyed grin. "Walk on the other side of the street."

In 1980, less than a year after the Barnard student died, New York City passed Local Law 10. A licensed architect or engineer now had to inspect every façade and exposed side wall in the city every five years. Dangerous cracks and other problems had to be fixed immediately; others had to be monitored until the next inspection. It was a superficial solution in more than one sense. Many landlords never bothered to monitor cracks, and when they were forced to make repairs they just took the ornaments down. In the nineteen-fifties, when the Brooklyn Academy of Music lost its cornice, people said that the Queen had lost her hat. Now more and more of the city was getting undressed: windows had their lintels shaved off, loft buildings were stripped of their cast-iron friezes, apartment buildings were capped by a few feet of "ghosting" where an imposing pediment had once hung. Meanwhile, the five-year inspection cycle left plenty of time for new pieces to come loose, and no one bothered to check a building's back, or most of its sides, at all.

"See that mold?" Lynch says, pausing in front of a long gouge along the morgue's northern side, where a rusted beam has been exposed. "That brick hasn't seen daylight since the Brooklyn Bridge was built, and it's just drying out now." When a steel beam rusts, its tightly rolled fibres exfoliate like an artichoke, expanding to as much as ten times their original thickness. Eventually, the bricks attached to the beam will protrude, crack along the mortar, and tumble down. "I've seen the rust on steel base plates literally lift a building off its foundations," Lynch says. "It's got that much force." This beam was so corroded that it not only knocked off the bricks but snapped a row of decorative cast-iron plates in half.

"We're in the belly of the beast," Lynch says, widening his eyes in horror, but in fact he has seen much worse. When he was growing up in Dublin, in the nineteen-seventies, it was the most dilapidated capital in Western Europe, bypassed by both world wars but also by reconstruction. His parents were building contractors—the calling went back a hundred years on his mother's side—and the family lived in the center of town, in a fifteen-room Victorian pile called Thorndale. Over the years, the Lynches gutted and repaired dozens of Dublin mansions, salvaging the best parts and installing them in their own house. "That house was a big megillah," Lynch says. "Living there was like being on a roller coaster. We had nine kids, two domestics, a cook, a driver, a nanny, and a housekeeper. We had two settings for dinner every night, and we used to go through twenty pints of milk a day."

By the time Lynch was seven, he was helping the family driver deliver wages to workers; at fifteen, he was working on scaffolds beside his mother. After college and a few years in London, he came to the United States when a girlfriend persuaded him to apply for a green card with her (he got one; she didn't). He's been in New York for eleven years, amassing an encyclopedic knowledge of its buildings. And, though Dublin has since been refurbished, he has no plans to return.

Nowadays, Lynch finds that his architectural tastes run to the International Style. His fashion sense is equally functional: clothes of denim and leather, hair cropped to a burr, glasses with black rims so thick they look like laboratory goggles. But he takes a kindly interest in the city's elaborate old structures, and scuttles across their roofs as nimbly as a daddy longlegs.

"With a building this old," he says, "if you *don't* see bulging walls you have to ask yourself, Why not?" Still, the renovation is an inspiring sight—proof that buildings can be born again. The beams are being coated in waterproof epoxy paints and copper flashings, the walls levelled with optical lasers. The new cornice is made of fibre-reinforced concrete that's even lighter than terra cotta, and a new cadre of craftsmen, catering to the public's revived affection for neoclassical buildings, have replicated the original details down to the egg-and-dart moldings. The finished building will house a children's center and cost New York upward of fifty million dollars.

After years of bull markets and budget surpluses, such campaigns are hardly uncommon. But not every building gets this kind of care. When Lynch and I emerge from the morgue, we turn a corner onto a quiet side street and stumble upon the laundry building behind the morgue, hunkering from view as if to shield its wounds. If buildings are like human bodies—with pipes for veins, wires for nerves, steel beams for bones, and foundations for feet—this one belongs in the emergency ward. Its façade lists dangerously forward, its side bulges out like a potbelly, its bricks are stained and crumbling. Lynch gets out his binoculars, follows the roofline for a moment, then tells me to take a look. "See how the cornice is cracked at the corner," he says, as fracture marks come into focus, spidering through the terra cotta. "That is in an active state of failure."

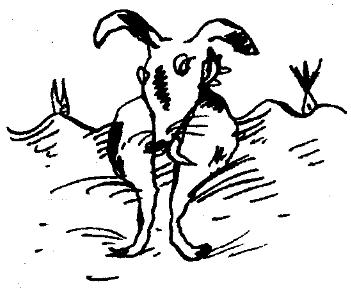
The laundry has taken fifty or sixty years to get that way, he says, and it will get tended to eventually. The question is when. "There's only so much money in the coffers. The city just has to wait for them to fill up again." And hope that the laundry is still standing when they do.

The worst building disaster in New York's recent history began with a bang, followed by a long, disquieting silence. On the morning of March 21, 1995, at 142 West 140th Street in Harlem, four-year-old Krystian Johnson was eating cereal from a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle tray when he heard a thunderous crash from his bedroom. His mother, Ethel, and her boyfriend, Robert Jacob, were relaxing in the living room. "Get up!" Ethel Johnson shouted, and sent Jacob to investigate. When he got to the bedroom, Jacob yelled back that he could see daylight. "Daylight?" Johnson said, incredulous. Krystian's room didn't have any windows.

Across the street, a doorman ducked his head outside and saw the remains of a wall suspended five feet above the ground. For nearly two minutes, the wall simply hung there. Then, suddenly, the entire eastern face of the six-story brick building sheared off and fell, with a bone-jarring rumble. The exposed floors, without an outer wall to support them, tilted down and sent furniture sliding off the edge. The Johnsons and Jacob, deeper inside the building, were safe, but eight of their sleeping neighbors tumbled to the ground. When it was over, the *Times* reported, the apartment looked like a broken dollhouse and three people were dead. "People were under the rubble, arms and legs sticking out," a fireman on the scene said. But the residents seemed more resigned than surprised. "I didn't hear anybody screaming," a neighbor said. "No crying, no hollering."

Buildings hardly ever collapse, Buildings Department officials say, and in a sense they're right. As a percentage of all the buildings in the city, the number that fall down unexpectedly is minute. Still, that percentage adds up to a handful of collapses every year, not counting the persistent rain of loose bricks and ornaments that the city classifies as "failure to maintain." When I spoke to Richard Visconti, then the Buildings Department's acting commissioner, in June, he said that the city's oldest buildings will probably still be standing fifty years from now. "This is the first year that we did not have a major collapse in the winter," his press officer noted. Less than a month later, two buildings fell down in a matter of three days. Both collapses were triggered by outside events: the first, a four-story town house in Brooklyn, was obliterated when leaking gas ignited, killing three people; the second, an architectural-salvage shop in the East Village, partially collapsed when workmen weakened a wall while making minor renovations. But, as the incident at 140th Street showed, buildings sometimes collapse on their own—and even the city's best efforts can't always stop them.

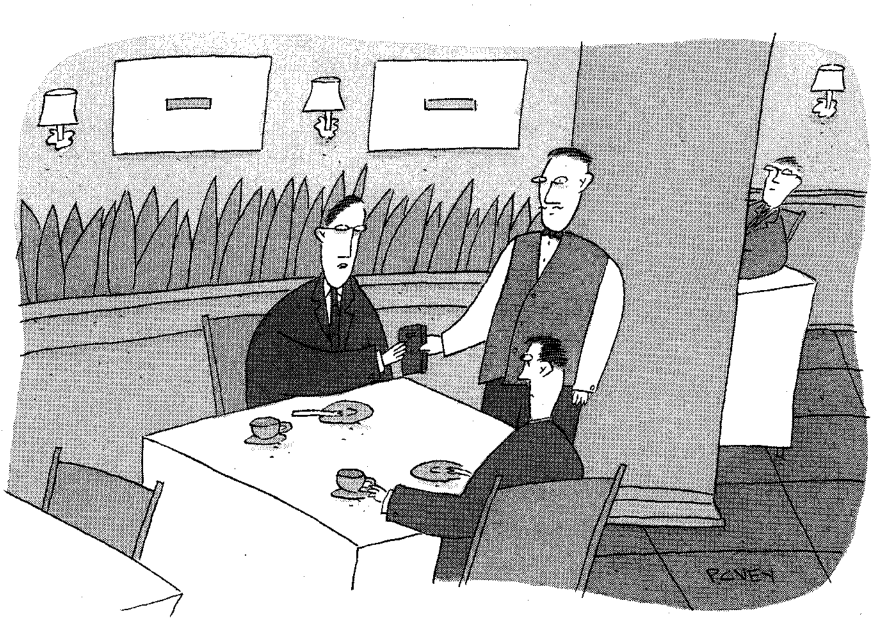
A week after the Harlem collapse, the district attorney called in the forensic engineer Kimball Beasley. By then, residents were complaining of criminal negligence, and an editorial in the *Times* called the incident "a shocking case of ineptitude." The building had already been cited for three hundred and thirty-seven violations of the housing-maintenance code, the *Times* pointed out, including fifty-six for immediately hazardous conditions. It had sloping floors, a flooded basement, parapets leaning four inches off center, and leaks so substantial that Ethel Johnson took an umbrella to the bathroom during storms. Two years earlier, a man in one apartment had fallen through his bathroom floor and landed a floor below, shattering his knee. A year later, the Johnsons' kitchen ceiling caved in. Nevertheless, for criminal charges to stick, the city had to find an obvious, foreseeable cause for the collapse—a cocked trigger that any owner should have recognized.



Beasley was probably the best man in the country for the job. Over the past twenty-seven years, he has sifted through the remains of nearly eleven hundred failed structures, occasionally at the behest of insurance companies. He admits to being "much more enamored of what goes wrong than what goes right," and seems like a cross between an engineer and an undertaker: tall but somewhat stooped, with a thinning pate, probing eyes, and an exact yet solicitous manner. Lynch calls him "a bit of a Dudley Do-Right," but he admires Beasley's professionalism, his skill, and his scientific dispassion.

Beasley began by interviewing the doorman and another eyewitness, and quickly pieced together the sequence of the collapse. The first thing to go was an eighteen-inch-thick foundation wall, built of chunks of Manhattan bedrock, on which the brick wall stood. The beams above it had all been sheared off or bent downward, so the wall must have collapsed vertically rather than falling on its side. When Beasley examined the identical wall on the adjacent wing, he saw that it, too, was on the verge of collapse: the foundation wall was listing by almost two inches, and there were long cracks in the wall above it. But what was causing the failure?

Collapses often begin at the bottom, with faulty foundations. Most of Manhattan is built on a thick slab of metamorphic bedrock known as Manhattan schist. But near the water, and in formerly marshy areas like the East Village, buildings balance on great piles of rubble from other construction sites. (You can tell where the schist lies by the size of the buildings above it: skyscrapers in midtown and on Wall Street, where the schist is close to the surface; midsize apartments south of Thirty-fourth Street, where the bedrock is deeper; and six-story town houses wherever there's fill.) Buildings built on fill tend to settle for a few decades and then stabilize, but if something disturbs the ground—a demolition, for instance, or a pile driver sinking piers—the



"Let me get this, but keep in mind that you'll pay for it in other, more subtle ways later on."

rubble will settle some more, like flour in a measuring cup. The East Village is full of ruptured walls and off-kilter façades, buildings leaning on one another or held together by metal ties, where foundations have settled unevenly. If a builder knocks down a town house without shoring up its neighbors, they may collapse, too.

Most of the Harlem building stood squarely on schist, but core samples from beneath the east wall showed layers of rubble, gravel, clay, and coarse sand. Still, there was no sign that the foundation wall had settled unevenly. Back at his lab, Beasley cut a plug from one of the rocks and put it into a compression machine: it could bear ten thousand pounds per square inch—more than enough to support the building. Under a microscope, the rock looked even better: no clay or mica contaminants to weaken it.

The problem, it turned out, lay in the mortar. Chemical analysis showed that it was a standard mixture of sand, lime, and Portland cement, but through the microscope it appeared to be full of holes. "There was a lot of internal erosion," Beasley says. "Water had percolated through the first three or four inches of mortar and washed the paste out." And there were soot deposits, he adds, which proved that the damage wasn't new.

Now Beasley had his first falling domino and could set the rest back up. The foundation wall, which stood above ground, had been battered by the prevailing winds, he reasoned, since it faced southeast. As the outer three or four inches of mortar eroded, the rocks along that side squeezed together, making the wall above them lean slightly. Once the wall moved out of line, the dead load above it—all the apartments that eventually collapsed—pushed down on it unevenly, increasing the pressure. "In the end, the load was just too much for that single rubble wall," Beasley says. When the wall collapsed, everything above it came down, too.

It seems predictable enough, in retrospect, but then cracks and leaning walls are a given in New York, and safety violations and minor collapses rarely foretell a disaster. Six inspectors had looked at the building on ten different dates in the five months before it fell, and none had sounded a warning. "You always ask yourself, Would I have known it was going to happen?" Beasley says. "They weren't huge cracks, they were just critically configured. Someone with training like mine should have noticed them. But if you're honest with yourself you have to say, No, I might have missed them."

In the end, the district attorney filed no charges of criminal negligence. Two years later, however, New York stiffened its inspection criteria with Local Law 11. An architect or engineer now has to certify all of a building's outside walls, not just its façade and exposed sides; all cracks have to be fixed rather than just monitored; and inspections must be performed from a scaffold or a fire escape, not just from the sidewalk with a pair of binoculars. Yet the new system can't catch every potential collapse, or even a great majority. "Local Laws 10 and 11 are really a minimal effort," Beasley says. "If you follow them alone, you will have serious problems." Most owners are conscientious, and are eager to upgrade their buildings, he says, but the fast-moving real-estate market can also discourage maintenance. Why fix a balcony that could fall in five years if you're planning to sell the building in two?

"There are always going to be collapses," Beasley concludes. "The theory is that if you keep the weather out of a structure it will last forever, but the reality is that the building stock in New York—and Baltimore and Philadelphia—is seeing so much age and deterioration that you just can't catch it all." The majority of Beasley's work involves modern structures: concrete slabs with failed reinforcements; curtain walls that come loose from their moorings; composite panels that delaminate in heat and humidity. But the more dramatic, more deadly collapses tend to involve older buildings. "I'm always looking up at the walls like a tourist," Beasley says. "I know the types of things that may be going on up there, and it makes me anxious."

Ironically, the buildings that worry engineers most are those that are meant to be the most comforting. The clock tower at St. Andrew's Church, on 127th Street, for instance, looks lovely from the outside: a rugged base of pink granite rises up through Victorian Gothic arches and slender turrets to a graceful, slate-covered spire. But, inside, the walls are lined with uneven bricks, and the spiral staircase is coated in a shaggy crust of corrosion, pigeon feathers, and droppings. Standing at the tower door one afternoon with the church warden and Michael Rebic, the property manager for the Episcopal diocese, Lynch and I debate whether to climb. As we peer up through the staircase spirallings, a heavy, acrid smell settles in our nostrils, while a mad flutter of wings beats upward toward the fractured light. "I wanted to get it cleaned before you came, but I didn't have time," the warden says behind us. "No one's been up there in a while."

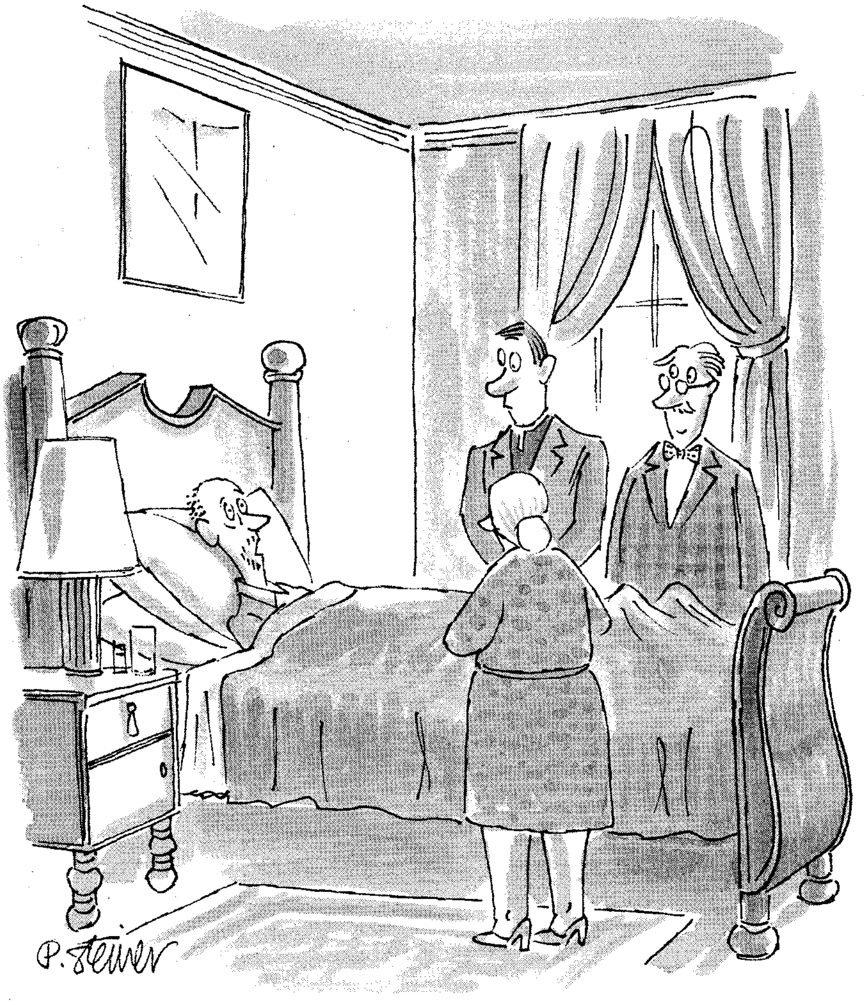
Lynch, as usual, leads the way. "Watch where you put your feet over here," he says, sidestepping something above us and sending down a rain of feathers and feces. When I get to where he was standing, I can just make out a small gathering of twigs on the floor. Two newborn pigeons are huddled inside it, their skin pinkish white, their eyes squeezed shut, their long necks twisted around each other as they strain upward for food. In the near-dark around them, clusters of speckled eggs glow like blind eyes from every wall sconce and windowsill. "Not a bad place they've got here," Lynch says. "Big space, no rent, no predators."

St. Andrew's was built in 1889, when one of the city's finest stock of brownstones was springing up above 110th Street. Real-estate speculators, encouraged by the new Harlem train line, had driven prices as high as a thousand dollars a lot, and even Andrew Carnegie soon built a mansion on East Ninety-first Street, where only shanties once stood. The St. Andrew's congregation, hoping to attract wealthier churchgoers, moved its original, wooden church from Lexington Avenue to Fifth Avenue, and then renovated it sumptuously. Within a few years, however, lot prices plummeted, and the gentry sashayed south again. By the nineteen-twenties, Harlem churches had some of the city's most exquisite architecture and some of its poorest congregations.

The same pattern has been repeated, to varying degrees, across New York. Churches may be designed for eternity, but in a city that's constantly reinventing itself—a "provisional" city, as Henry James put it, "crowned not only with no history, but with no credible possibility of time for history"—their fate depends on demographics and, more and more, on politics. "Churches are between a rock and a hard place," Rebic says. "They're expected to house the homeless, hold community meetings, host after-school programs and A.A. meetings. They're increasingly expected to be our social safety net, but they're cut off from most kinds of funding." Religious groups are disqualified from nearly all government and private grants, and they can't lease their space to for-profit organizations without risking their tax-exempt status. Donations are their only true resource, yet most congregations have dwindled dramatically since the turn of the century. On a good Sunday, St. Andrew's fills a hundred and twenty seats and leaves more than a thousand empty.

All told, New York has more than twenty-five hundred Protestant and Catholic churches. Some are architectural landmarks; many are more than fifty years old; many need major repairs. "Churches are absolutely the least able to take care of their buildings of any owner," Tim Allanbrook, a preservation architect, says. "We typically get involved, do a survey, tell them the shocking news that they'll have to pay X million dollars, and then try to help them spend best what small amount they have." Some churches can get away with phasing in repairs year by year, thanks to grants from the Landmarks Conservancy and other organizations. But others "have gone right past stop," as Lynch puts it. "I once worked in a Catholic church in Brooklyn that was so far gone that the congregation built a new, smaller church inside it," he says. "And I've seen twenty or thirty cases just as bad. It's frightening. I mean, you go there and you ask yourself, Where do I even start?"

Halfway up St. Andrew's tower, the brick lining gives way to wood, and each turn of the staircase seems to take us back another decade. The belfry is hung with cobwebs, and the carillon is silent. From the wall beside it, a cartoon Daddy Warbucks surveys the scene while puffing a cigar—the work of some bored bell ringer in the nineteen-twenties. Lynch shines the beam of his flashlight over an adjacent chamber and picks out two desiccated pigeons, covered in debris on the floor. Then he, Rebic, and I move on to a room filled with complicated levers and gears, seized up with rust.



"I always lived vicariously. Why can't I die vicariously?"

Thin iron spindles stretch up through holes in the ceiling to the next floor. In the room above, we find that they connect to large glass clocks set in all four walls. But the hands on each clock have frozen at different times, and the pigeons use them as perches.

Rickety wooden ladders lead from one level to the next, their rungs even filthier than the staircase steps. Lynch grips the top rung, cringing, and peers up into the dark spire—only to get a stream of pigeon droppings in the face. He curses and ducks, then wipes off his glasses. "I've been anointed," he shouts down to Rebic. "But I don't think it was the Holy Spirit." Rebic doesn't laugh. He's deathly afraid of heights, it turns out, and the missing steps and railings require all his attention. When he reaches the first ladder, he shakes his head and turns around. "I do most of my praying in towers like this," he mutters, and heads downstairs.

In 1984, a structural survey showed that St. Andrew's needed a $1.7-million restoration. But the church couldn't even afford a full-time priest, so the repairs were put off. Some clergymen point with great pride to the shabbiness of their buildings, one Episcopal official told me. They see it as concrete proof that their money is going to the needy. But, as churches age, the costs of neglect escalate exponentially: fixing a leaky roof may cost two hundred thousand dollars, but repairing a decade's worth of water damage could cost millions. Rebic showed me one church in the Bronx with a roofline so bent and twisted by age that it looked as if it were having a seizure. The congregation needed to move out by winter or risk a collapse, but just demolishing the building would cost a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The congregation didn't even have that.

"How can you demand so much from churches and not expect this to happen?" Rebic said. "And where are people going to meet afterward? Starbucks?" But the condition of New York's churches raises an even more immediate question: How could they have been allowed to become so unsafe? As it turns out, Local Laws 10 and 11 both contain a sizable loophole: only buildings with more than six stories have to be inspected. A typical six-story building is around seventy feet tall. A church steeple may be twice that tall, but because it constitutes only a single story of a two- or three-story building, it will pass well below the city's radar. The same is true of most of the city's town houses and tenements. Their shaky foundations once kept them from rising above six stories; now their height shields them from inspection.

"Who picked six stories? And why?" Tim Henry, of Henry Restoration, wonders. "If something fell from four or five stories, it would hurt pretty bad, too." Henry has repaired a number of churches during the past few years, many of them in "very scary condition." But the owners usually don't call until someone finds a piece of the building on the ground. "Try standing on the street and looking at something a hundred and fifty feet above you," Henry says. "What you think is flaking paint might be a crack. Until you go up there, you won't know. But why would you go if you don't have any money to fix it?" Allanbrook agrees. "Some of these spires are in very poor neighborhoods," he says. "So there may be some surprises waiting."

When Lynch and I poke our heads through the final trapdoor at St. Andrew's, there's a sudden sense of space above, and the pigeons flapping frantically around us escape into the spire. Lynch's flashlight picks out a few bags of sand, a pile of slate tiles, and an assemblage of boards and platforms that zigzag upward. "Surreal, isn't it?" he says. "I can guarantee you they haven't sent anybody up here in eighty or ninety years—maybe not since it was built."

He walks across the floor slowly, testing the boards for any soft spots. "All right now," he says, focussing the beam on the wall in front of him. "Let's look at the crucial elements." The spire is hexagonal, perhaps fifteen feet in diameter, with panels framed by vertical steel rafters that are connected by thin horizontal runners. Its six-by-twelve slate tiles—some nine thousand of them, Lynch guesses—are tied to the runners by bits of copper wire. Lynch picks at a wire with his fingernail until it snaps like a piece of straw. "These are all gone," he says. "Copper oxidizes over time, and the slates saw against their ties as the wind moves over them." When the spire was built, the inside was pitch black; now needles of light shine through hundreds of chinks in its armor.

Squinting my eyes and peering through one of the chinks, I can look down the length of Manhattan, over Harlem's ragged shoulders to the distant gleaming of the refinished Chrysler tower—a reverse perspective, in more than one sense, of the one from the SoHo rooftop. There has been some restoration in Harlem, with a brownstone cleaned up here and an apartment building there, yet along its streets boarded windows can still be as common as glass ones, and some blocks are lined with sidewalk bridges painted with warning symbols for the fire department: an empty square for "Proceed with Caution"; a square with a diagonal slash for "Small Areas of Dangerous Floors"; a square with an "X" for "Partial Collapse, Do Not Enter."

Every building is headed that way eventually, a structural engineer might say—whether the market falls or continues to rise. Steel rusts, concrete crumbles, terra cotta cracks, and loose bricks tumble. "The old city dies, and the new city rises on its ruins," Le Corbusier wrote in 1935, after climbing the Empire State Building. "Not gradually, but in a burst, suddenly—as the butterfly emerges from the cocoon of the caterpillar." But New York has been loath to quit its chrysalis completely, however fissured and fragile it may be. The older a building gets, the less willing we are to replace it, and so we rely on people like Lynch. Theirs are the invisible hands and watchful minds that keep the sidewalks bustling, deflecting the tragic story lines that lie poised above us.

"It's really not too bad," Lynch says, looking around the St. Andrew's spire. "I've definitely seen worse." Then his eyes find a metal rod and follow its diagonal path from a rafter to the center of the floor. Darting his flashlight beam here and there, he locates five others like it, each connected to a different rafter. Then he lowers the light to the ground, where the rods converge, their rusted tips tapering to spear points. "Now, that doesn't look good," he says. "These are support rods that are supposed to hold the tower in place—to keep it from rocking in the wind—but they're completely corroded at the bottom." Is that a serious problem? I ask. "The loss of towers like this is not uncommon," he says. "It's only a matter of time."

Then he smiles and shrugs: "Nothing here that can't be fixed." ♦

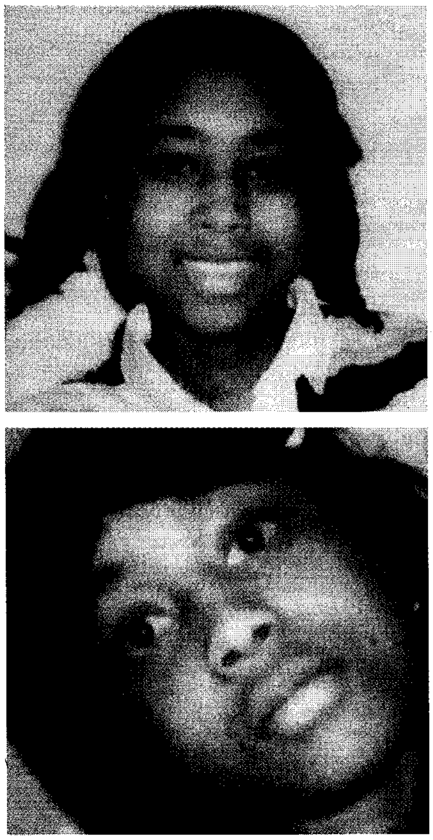
A REPORTER AT LARGE

WE TWO MADE ONE

Why did identical twin sisters decide to speak only to each other in a way no one else could understand?

BY HILTON ALS

Metaphors sustain us. I have always clung to the story in Plato's Symposium of two halves meeting after a long separation in "an amazement of love and friendship and intimacy," because the pursuit of this dream drives so many of us—or, at least, those of us who long to be irrevocably transformed by closeness. It lies at the core of the events that prompted the journey I'm taking now, which finds me sitting in a cold carriage on a fast train headed toward Haverfordwest, a small market town in southwest Wales. I am travelling into blackness, or, more specifically, blackness as a trope, blackness as it was defined and revised, espoused and abandoned, by two colored girls known as "the silent twins"—the identical twins June and Jennifer Gibbons, who, living in Great Britain with virtually no education and no peers, developed brutal skills of self-invention and cleaved to their own ferocious intimacy, their continually "amazed" relationship with their other half. For most of their lives together, they refused to speak to anyone but each other—a refusal that led to their emotional exile, their institutionalization, and, eventually, to the misguided appropriation of their story by activists and theorists who used it to pose questions about the nature of identity and the strange birthright that twins are forced to bear.



June, top, and Jennifer Gibbons in the early eighties, when they tried to become famous authors. Opposite: June, in 1994, photographed by Terence Donovan.

It is a cold, gray day, the kind of day that Americans, reading English novels, imagine being far more picturesque than the reality. The long train hugs the coast, close enough for me to see the gray-green water rolling and lapping—almost close enough for me to reach out and touch it. As the train approaches the Haverfordwest station, I see June Gibbons, the only black person on the platform. She spots me, too, the only black person on the train, and she nods as I disembark. She is wearing jeans and a white T-shirt and black boots and a large blue jacket, in which her thin frame seems to swim. She is accompanied by a pleasant white woman who works in the halfway house where June is living. June's face—the face I have already studied in photographs—is long and narrow and fine. She smiles when I introduce myself, exposing sharp teeth stained by tobacco. Almost at once, she tells me, in a muffled, fast voice, that we should hurry into a taxi. Actually, it's more of a command: "Get in the taxi!" I sit in the front seat, next to the driver.

"June would like you to come and have tea," her companion says, with a bright smile.

We drive through the town: steep hills, shops, children in school uniforms shouting and jostling one another, housing estates where all the houses look the same—two-storied brown stucco with green or white or red doors and neat little paths and patches of wet green separating them from each other. The metal-gray sky hangs low, as smoke drifts from the brick chimneys. June asks about the title of the book I am carrying, "In Search of Wales," by H. V. Morton. "Well, he's found it, then!" she says quickly, to no one in particular. She laughs, but examines me with the eyes of someone who, while waiting to be seen, has learned how to watch closely.

June Alison and Jennifer Lorraine Gibbons were born at an R.A.F. hospital in Aden, in the Middle East, on April 11, 1963. June arrived first, at 8:10 A.M., but Jennifer, born ten minutes later, seemed to be the stronger twin, more alert and physically robust. Their parents were from Barbados: Aubrey, tall, handsome, and stiff, and Gloria, whose soft eyes gave her a gentle, yielding appearance. She relied on Aubrey to make decisions for her, just as June would later defer to Jennifer. In 1960, Aubrey, an Anglophile who had long dreamed of being a proper English gentleman, had decided this: he would make a life for himself and his family (a daughter, Greta, had been born in 1957; a son, David, in 1959) away from his homeland. He went to stay with a relative in Coventry and soon qualified as a staff technician for the R.A.F. Gloria followed, with Greta and David, several months later.

The Gibbons family was part of the postwar migratory wave of West Indians commonly called the Windrush generation, after a ship that carried large numbers of black island dwellers to the "mother country." And, like all the other immigrants, Aubrey and Gloria hoped that in their new land they would become true Britons, with a solid home

COURTESY OLIVIA LICHTENSTEIN; "THE SILENT TWIN—WITHOUT MY SHADOW" (1994)/BBC

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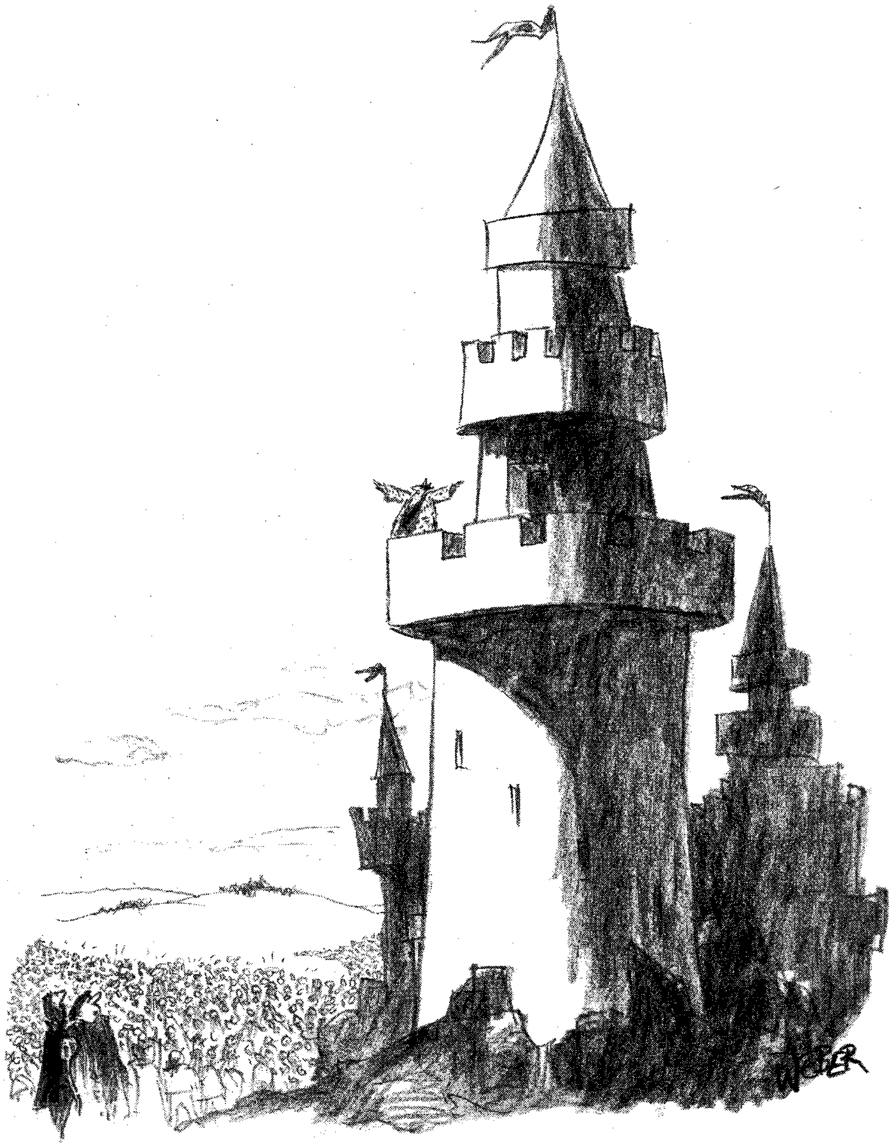
and the English ways they'd learned about at school—a reverence for the Queen and for cricket. Their dream included a pretty patch of green on which to raise their children. Instead, they moved from post to post, struggling to adapt to a culture that often found them ugly—or, at least, irritating in their difference, with their strange accents, dark skin, and oddly textured hair.

In late 1963, the family returned from the posting in Aden and settled at the R.A.F. base in Linton, Yorkshire. The twins—or "twinnies," as Gloria called them—had round cheeks and bows in their hair and winning smiles, and soon they had a baby sister, Rosie, born in 1967, whom they adored. But even as toddlers they could barely speak: three or four words at the most. "When they first started their schooling, we knew they had the speech problem," Aubrey said, in an unused interview for a BBC documentary, "The Silent Twin—Without My Shadow" (1994), written and produced by Olivia Lichtenstein. "In the home, they'd talk, make sounds, and all that, but we knew that they weren't quite like, you know, normal children, talking readily." In 1971, when the twins were eight, Aubrey was posted to Chivenor, in Devon. At their new school, the girls were taunted mercilessly about their skin color and their silence. "Eight or nine, we started suffering, and we stopped talking," June told me when I saw her in November of 1998. "People called us names—we were the only black girls in school. Terrible names. They pulled our hair." The twins soon stopped making eye contact with others, perhaps so as not to have to see themselves judged. They also stopped speaking to their parents and their older siblings, whose questions they had previously responded to. "We made a pact," June explained. "We said we weren't going to speak to anybody. We stopped talking altogether—only us two, in our bedroom upstairs." Aubrey and Gloria could sometimes hear the girls chattering to each other in their room, in a patois that they couldn't understand any more than they understood the girls' silence.



"And to think he started in accounting."

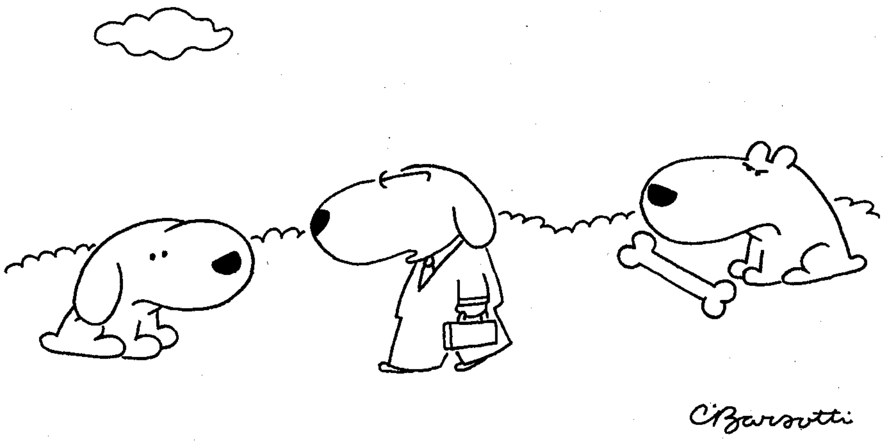
In 1974, when the twins were eleven, Aubrey was transferred to Haverfordwest, and the family moved to a small house on the local R.A.F. housing estate. Grim and closed off, the Haverfordwest community was known for instances of spectacular racism. The twins attended the Haverfordwest County Secondary School, where they and their brother, David, were once again the only black students, and where the bullying was so severe that the girls had to be dismissed five minutes early every day, in order to give them a head start for the walk home. They walked slowly, and as they left the school their movements were always synchronized: one thin girl with long arms and legs following the other, heads bowed, as if in prayer.

The mother of Diane Williams, the girls' only friend at the time, remembered them as "beautifully dressed, always clean and tidy" (a dubious compliment—the implication being that one expected them to be dirty). Perhaps Diane appealed to June and Jennifer because she was a romantic figure: sickly and sympathetic and religious. They were religious, too. "We had a ritual," June told me. "We'd kneel down by the bed and ask God to forgive our sins. We'd open the Bible and start chanting from it and pray like mad. We'd pray to Him not to let us hurt our family by ignoring them, to give us strength to talk to our mother, our father. We couldn't do it. Hard it was. Too hard."

In 1976, John Rees, a school medical officer, came to Haverfordwest to vaccinate the students against tuberculosis. When he later spoke to Marjorie Wallace, the author of a 1986 book, "The Silent Twins," which is out of print in the United States but remains the principal source of information about the girls, he described a parade of white arms and then, suddenly, a black one. He tried to prepare what he called "the little Negress" who stood in front of him for the sting of inoculation, but she seemed to be in a trance, nearly lifeless, doll-like. He rubbed a little alcohol on her upper arm and vaccinated her. Soon she was followed by an identical black girl, who also did not react to the needle. Rees was disturbed by their behavior and baffled by the school's headmaster when he asked him about it: the headmaster didn't seem to think that the girls were especially troubled. That is, they weren't *trouble*, the only real barometer then for colored students' behavior.

Rees referred the case to Evan Davies, the consultant child psychiatrist for the region. Davies tried to talk to the twins, but they would not respond. He was unable to tell them apart. "Treatment under these circumstances presents a considerable challenge which I am reluctant to accept," he wrote to Rees. Instead, he referred the girls to Ann Treharne, the chief speech therapist at Haverfordwest's Withybush Hospital, where they began treatment in February, 1977. They almost never spoke to Treharne or to each other in front of her, but they did agree to read aloud, onto tape, after she had left the room. Listening to the tapes, Treharne discovered that the twins' "secret language" was actually a mixture of Barbadian slang and English, spoken very quickly. The girls had West Indian accents and were hampered by palatal fricatives—for the "s" sound they would say "sh," for instance. When she was in the room, Treharne sensed that June wanted to speak to her and was stopped only by eye signals from Jennifer, who appeared to control June's actions. (June called this form of communication "eye language.") Jennifer "sat there with an expressionless gaze, but I felt her power," Treharne told Wallace. "The thought entered my mind that June was possessed by her twin."

Rees, working with Evans and Tim Thomas, an educational psychologist who had been recruited to the Gibbons case, decided that the girls should be transferred to the Eastgate Centre for Special Education, in Pembroke, eight miles away, where an instructor named Cathy Arthur was put in charge of them. Aubrey and Gloria did not interfere in the decisions that were made for their daughters; they felt they had to trust the British authorities, who presumably knew better than they did. "We were never, like, consulted at any time," Aubrey told Lichtenstein. "At no time were we called and said, 'Well, these children are not doing as well as they should,' you know. Before we knew it, they were into Eastgate, and we just had to toe the line, as it were."



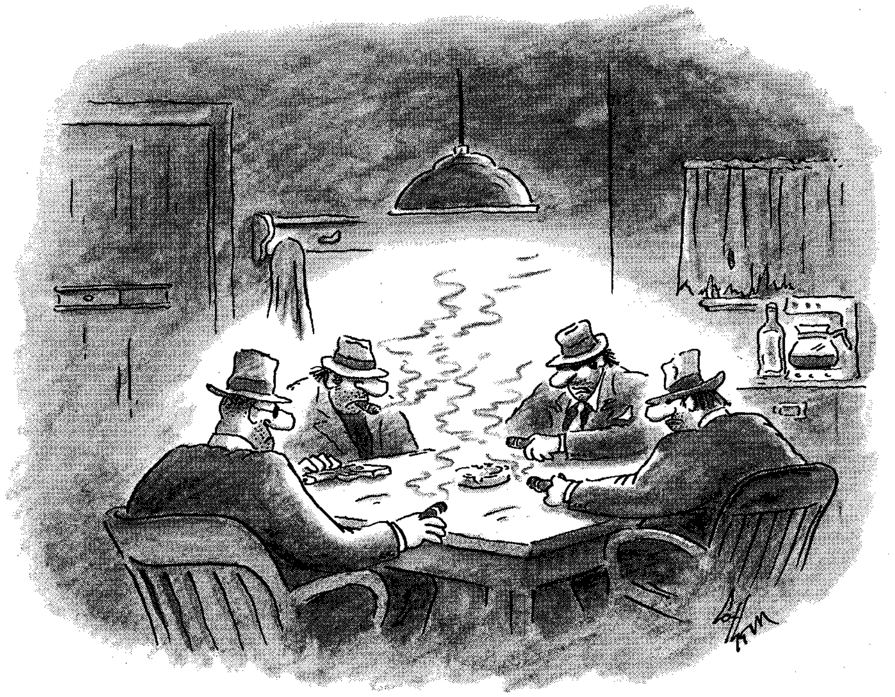
"It's non-negotiable."

At Eastgate, the girls fared little better than they had at their previous schools. They had therapy sessions with Tim Thomas, but they responded with the same stiffness and downcast eyes that had, by then, thrown a pall over their family dinners, where their muteness dominated everything and everyone and often drove their older sister, Greta, to tears. The twins attended Greta's wedding, in 1978, but refused to join in the festivities. Thomas, in an interview for Lichtenstein's documentary, said that when he first met the twins "there was a tremendous sort of novelty value" to them. But that interest quickly turned to anger. " 'Damn insolence' was an expression that was once used in relation to the girls," Thomas recalled. "It was understandable in the sense you've got people there sitting in front of you who say nothing—you are getting animated about a particular lesson and there is absolutely no feedback. It's quite threatening, in a way."

In late 1977, Thomas and Arthur, unable to come up with any productive form of treatment, proposed to their colleagues that the fourteen-year-old girls be separated: Jennifer would remain at Eastgate and June would be sent to live at St. David's Adolescent Unit, thirty miles away, where Evan Davies was in residence. This was an aggressive measure, presumably intended to help the twins establish distinct personalities, and it caused a certain amount of disharmony among the Eastgate staff. "We were trapped, really, because if they went on as they were, what sort of future would they have—not being able to communicate?" Thomas told me. "There was one group of us that said we should separate them, because it would give them the opportunity to see if they survive. We felt it was an incredibly controlled situation, and we didn't know who was exercising the control, June or Jennifer."

The task of telling the girls about the plan fell to Thomas. Although the twins had toyed with the idea of separation before—sometimes writing notes asking for one of them to be sent to Barbados, one to America—the reality of it terrified them. Within moments, they were screaming and hitting each other. Jennifer dug her nails into June's cheek. June pulled a chunk of hair out of Jennifer's head. They chased each other out of Thomas's office, shrieking, and had to be forcibly parted.

Suddenly, they could talk—or would talk. They telephoned Thomas and other staff members at Eastgate, promising to speak if they were allowed to stay together. "They talked to me on the phone for a long time, saying, 'Everything will be fine. We'll talk to you tomorrow.' But nothing happened," Thomas told me. "We would walk in the next day and



"Use a hockey stick—make it look like a game."

nothing, not a flicker." In March, 1978, the separation was carried out. But at St. David's June fell into such despair that she stopped moving almost entirely. It once took two people to get her out of bed, and then all they could do was prop her against a wall; her body was as stiff and heavy as a corpse.

Virginia and Grace Kennedy (the subject of a powerful film-essay, "Poto and Cabengo," by Jean-Pierre Gorin) were twins born in California in the nineteen-seventies, who developed a language that their social workers and speech therapists couldn't understand. They were sent to separate schools as children and successfully "socialized." But it was perhaps too late to teach the teen-age Gibbons twins any kind of existence other than the one now dictated by their imaginations. Even as they struggled to become themselves, they could not live without each other. "You are Jennifer. You are me," Jennifer would say over the years, when she felt her sister pulling away from their bond. "I am June. I am June," her sister would cry out in anguished response. "One day, she'd wake up and be me, and one day I would wake up and be her," June told Lichtenstein. "And we used to say to each other, 'Give me back myself. If you give me back myself I'll give you back yourself.' " Needless to say, the separation was a failure, at least from the standpoint of "rehabilitation." June was sent back to Eastgate, and by the winter of 1979, when they were sixteen, both girls had left school forever and were on the dole.

Back at home, up in their room, with bunk beds and a little window overlooking the housing estate, the smell of food clung to the walls, and the twins no longer came downstairs for meals. They spoke to no one but their younger sister, Rosie. When they did have to communicate, they did so by letter: "We want to see 'Top of the Pops' tonight at 7:00 P.M. Please leave living room door open."

Although Aubrey didn't mention it, he had clearly long since lost his dream of assimilation. He would come home every day, switch on the television, and wait for Gloria to serve him dinner. He was "just colored," after all, a conscientious worker in a mid-level job with two daughters who had turned their backs on him, on the world. What could he say? David had left home. Greta rarely visited. June recognized her parents' pain and bewilderment but was unable to acknowledge it. In her diary she wrote, "I worry about my mother. I see grief for all those years in her eyes. She is not young, but she is romantic, a child at heart." In closing themselves off, the twins had lost their parents as wholly as their parents had lost them.

"Tend to be too content to do very little. They show very little initiative or imagination," a teacher had once written about the girls. The teacher was wrong about this; their imagination transformed them and the narrow parameters of their room. Using dolls, they invented a family to replace the one they had excommunicated. Most of their doll children were twins and had elaborate names like Johnny Joshua and Annemarie Esther Kingston or Alma and Billy Hoe Haines. There was also a doll Gibbons family. They were Americans, mostly, from places like Philadelphia or Malibu. When one of the dolls died, Rosie, the official "registrar" of the doll world, would record the cause of its demise with relish:

> June Gibbons: Aged 9. Died of leg injury.
> George Gibbons. Aged 4. Died of eczema.
> Bluey Gibbons. Aged two and a half. Died of appendix.
> Peter Gibbons. Aged 5. Adopted. Presumed dead.
> Julie Gibbons. Age 2 1/2. Died of a "stamped stomach".
> Polly Morgan-Gibbons. Age 4. Died of a slit face and Susie Pope-Gibbons died the same time of a cracked skull.

In 1979, for Christmas, Gloria gave June and Jennifer each a red, leather-bound diary with a lock, and they began to keep a detailed account of their lives, as part of a new program of "self-improvement." They had pooled their dole money to enroll in a creative-writing correspondence course—registering as one person, Student No. 8201—and they prepared themselves to become famous authors.

That January, June began writing a novel called "The Pepsi-Cola Addict," whose hero, Preston Wildey-King, a teen-ager from Malibu, fantasizes about living somewhere else (all quotations from Jennifer and June's writing and diaries are taken from Marjorie Wallace's book):

> The tenement in which he lived was alternately too hot or too cold. The room remained suffocatingly hot with the contained heat of the day. Preston was thinking he was cold. His head felt neurotic and dizzy. It re-

> sembled ice. He thought he wouldn't mind if he lived in Arizona, or even Hawaii; they lived on cool beverages, and didn't care what you did. Sitting in his own pad and sipping 300 cans of Pepsi-Cola every day.

Preston is seduced by his schoolteacher. He takes up with a gang. A stint in jail follows, and an attempt at homosexual seduction. And, in the end, a return home to his mother and sister and an apparent death from an overdose of barbiturates.

Jennifer wrote two novels in a matter of weeks: "The Pugilist," about a boy with a failing heart whose surgeon father implants in him the heart—and soul—of their boxer dog; and "Discomania," the story of a group of urban youths who are controlled by their need for a disco beat. "I started my fabulous new novel 'Discomania' today," she wrote in her diary, on June 8, 1980, two months after her seventeenth birthday. "Last night I spent the night doing the 14 plot points. It's gonna be a knockout, I'm sure."

June's novel was published by a vanity press (she persuaded Jennifer to contribute her dole money to help pay for the publication), but Jennifer, who tried legitimate presses, met with nothing but rejection. She persevered, writing at an incredible rate, and she and June spent days taking "author photographs" of each other. They approached their diaries as literary works, too, often writing a first draft, then revising and rewriting to create a final version for posterity.

June and Jennifer at eighteen: the real world was beckoning. They longed for someone to *see* them, and they settled on Lance Kennedy, a fellow Eastgate student who had defended them against the abuse of their other classmates. Lance was American, and though they had not been able to acknowledge him then, they had stored away their memory of him. By the time the twins tracked down his family's address—in Welsh Hook, ten miles from Haverfordwest—he had moved to Philadelphia. But he had three younger brothers who were still in Wales—Jerry, the oldest; Wayne, who was close to the twins' age; and Carl, the youngest. (I have used the pseudonyms that Wallace invented for her book.)

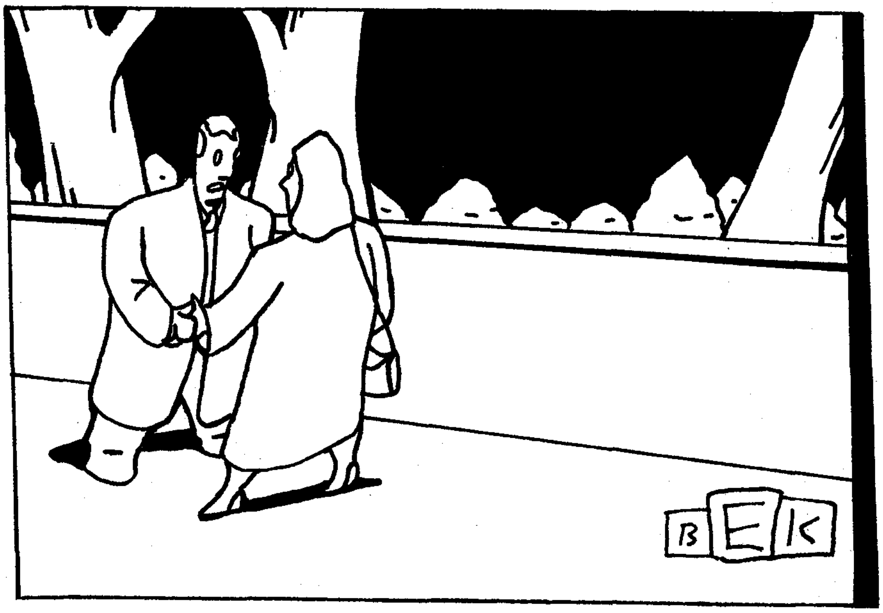
In April, 1981, June and Jennifer took a taxi to the Kennedy house for the first time. When they arrived, it was empty. The door was unlocked. Inside, they made peanut-butter sandwiches, broke a bedroom door, swooned over the Kennedy boys' clothes, and studied the photographs of Hawaii that were on the walls. The boys' father and stepmother came home and discovered the girls trying to flee, but when they couldn't persuade the twins to speak they felt sorry for them and let them go. June and Jennifer didn't give up. They spent all their money taking taxis to Welsh Hook. Eventually, they met the other Kennedy sons and began seeing them regularly.

"They were American boys, white boys," June told me. "Good-looking, like . . . do you know that boy Leo DiCaprio? We'd take a taxi, all in makeup and short skirts and high shoes and wigs and lipstick, like ladies, like film stars. We were trying to entice the boys, to make them like us. We wanted to be glamorized, so we got long brown wigs and sunglasses and chewing gum. We spent about three hours getting ready to go out."

The girls also discovered drinking and drugs. "We needed to have a bottle to drink," June told me. "Without the whiskey, we didn't speak. We reckon that God told us to buy drink, and it worked. We sniffed glue and lighter fluid. We were different then, laughing and talking. We were so relaxed and laid-back." Wayne bought pot, sniffed glue, and drank with them, but wasn't interested in anything more. However, the youngest Kennedy, Carl, then fourteen, saw possibility in these strange black girls who wore wigs and mismatched outfits. "Dear Diary," Jennifer wrote in June, 1981. "One of the best days of my sweet life. I've lost my beautiful virginity to Carl Kennedy. At last. It hurt a lot but it happened. There was lots of blood. We did it in church. Sorry God. Your friend. Jenny." The church was near the Kennedys' home; the three had got drunk, and June had watched as Jennifer and Carl had sex in the chancel. The pain this caused June found expression in her diary:

> Something like magic is happening. I am seeing Jennifer for the first time like she is seeing me. I think she is slow, cold, has no respect and talks too much; but she thinks I am the same. We are both holding each other back. . . . There is a murderous gleam in her eye. Dear Lord, I am scared of her. She is not normal. She is having a nervous breakdown. Someone is driving her insane. It is me.

Thirteen days later, in the Kennedys' barn, June lay down, drunk, to duplicate her sister's experience. "I want your baby. I love you," she called out in a paroxysm of pain and hopefulness, as the boy fumbled and groped. This was the first physical affection the girls had known. Though they were ignored, insulted, and sometimes even beaten up by the Kennedy boys, it was *their* summer, the



"If you'll have me, I'd like to be your blind spot."

first in which they were not living as dolls, in their room crammed with diaries and manuscripts. "Five weeks of fun, that was. Five weeks of fun. We were very happy," June told me. "We had our wicked way with them, the boys." Jennifer wrote in her diary:

> My boy Carl, he doesn't know how good he's been to me. . . . I could feel the intense hotness of his eyes slowly studying my body. At that moment I felt like a very beautiful girl. I knew he was infatuated with me, my looks and my mysterious style.

But, according to Wallace, there was no real mystery for the Kennedy boys when it came to the Gibbons girls. The twins were no better than two barely tolerated dogs who sat at their feet, waiting for attention and the scraps of food that the Kennedys sometimes literally tossed into their mouths. Before the Kennedys moved back to America, at the end of the summer, the girls begged for talismans to remember them by. Carl gave them a dirty T-shirt; Jerry offered a photograph and two mismatched socks; Wayne sold June an old jacket.

Fall, 1981. With no one else to focus on, the twins began to take out their aggressions on themselves. They spent all their money on food. They gorged and purged and gorged and purged: more repetition, more boredom. They poured their emotional torment into their mercilessly frank and expository diaries. "I will gain control, control over my mind, my body," Jennifer later wrote. "I must be at peace with myself. I will want death if I have no peace. And who will cry at my funeral? Teenager dies from DIET, BINGE, LIFE."

June:

> I loathe food which destroys my soul, my face, my body. Yet I go on eating out of duty, out of weariness. I bite into the body of my very enemy and as I chew my food will win. It can take dominion over my flesh, making me corrupt and depraved, exposing me to a plumpness of flesh, a fattening of the heart, over-healthy, rarely satisfied.

Every time the twins looked up and saw each other, they saw their own peculiar form of desolation staring back at them. They tried to change their looks, sending away to the West Indies for hair and skin creams. They tried magic. Jennifer wrote, "I now direct currents of my higher psychic mind to command my guardian angel to work through my skin and contact my healing powers so they may eliminate the scar on the bridge of my nose." But they couldn't work out who they were supposed to be for other people until they understood who they were for each other. "J. and I are like lovers," June wrote. "A love-hate relationship. She thinks I am weak. She knows not how I fear her. This makes me feel more weak. I want to be strong enough to split from her. Oh Lord help me, I am in despair." Jennifer: "She should have died at birth. Cain killed Abel. No twin should forget that." June: "I'm in enslavement to her, this creature . . . who is with me every hour of my living soul." Jennifer: "J. can't be my real twin. My real twin was born the exact time as me, has my rising sign, my looks, my ways, my dreams, my ambitions. He or she will have my weaknesses, failures, opinions. All this makes a twin—no differences. I can't stand differences."

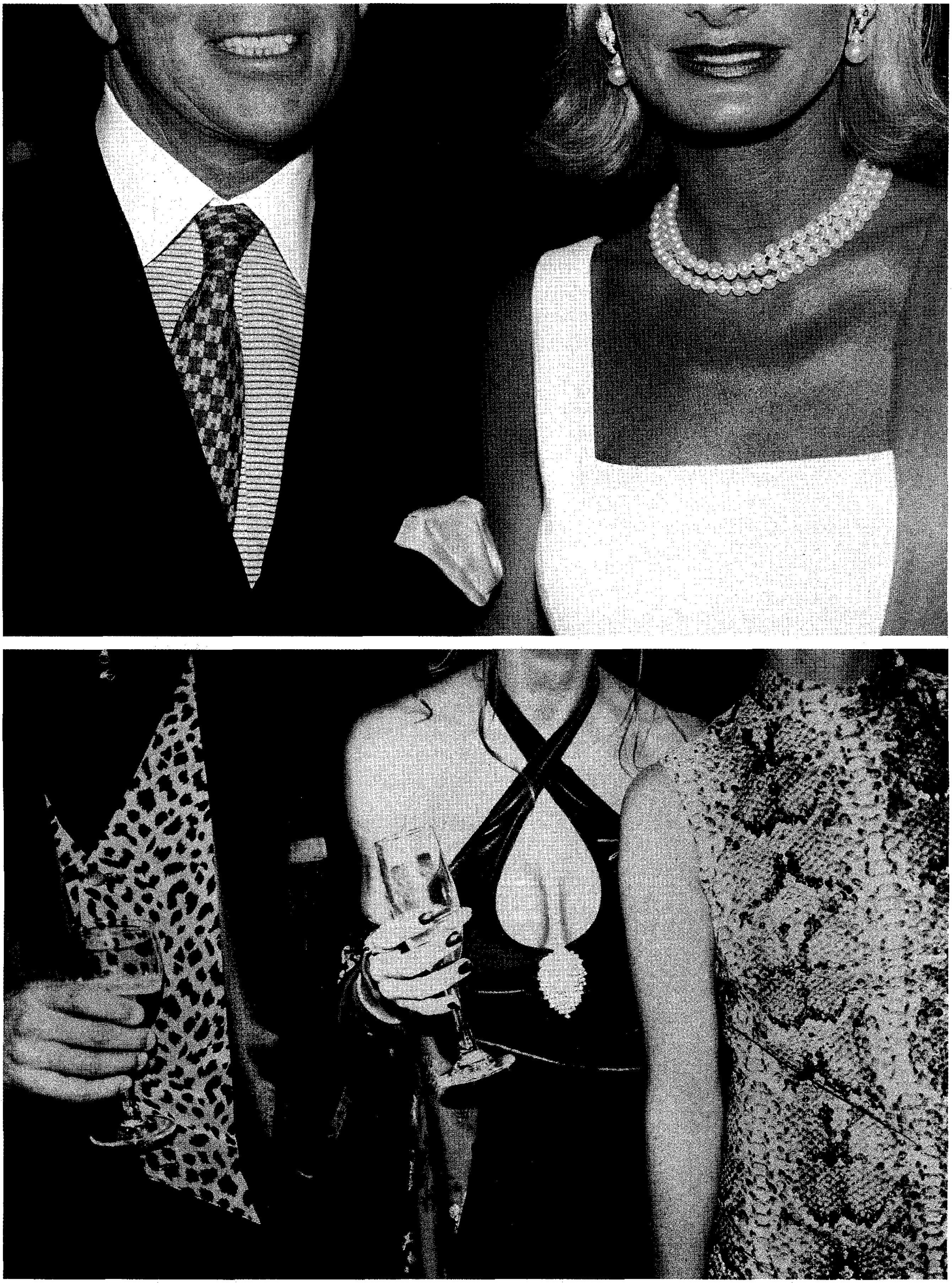
Soon they also began to direct their loathing at their surroundings. Rejected by a local gang, they formed a gang of two. They began stealing bicycles and glue, ringing people's doorbells repeatedly. They broke into a training center for spastic adults and into a school. They smashed windows, stole books, drew graffiti on walls. They tried to break a pay phone, then called the police to confess to their crimes, hanging up and running away before the police could arrive on the scene. Eventually, the twins grew bored with the scale of their exploits and decided to escalate. "I'm planning on making petrol bombs," June wrote. "A bottle, petrol and paper, then hurl it through the window. . . . I'm going to be the biggest arsonist around!" Fire was the ultimate statement of their anguish and their hope: it burned and destroyed and cleansed. On October 24, 1981, June wrote:

> All this week I've wanted to burn down the tractor store in Snowdrop Lane. I burned it down today—with the help of J., of course. It was the biggest night of my life. We climbed over a barbed wire fence. The sky grew blacker and it started to rain. . . . All the while, my lovely glorious fire was licking its way through the roof, and the thick smoke filled the night sky. It was a picture which will live in my mind for ever—oh what a sinful, evil, selfish mind. I know the Lord will forgive me. It's been a long, painful, hard year. Don't I deserve to express my distress?

On November 8th, the twins smashed a window at Pembroke Technical College. A policeman patrolling the vicinity heard them, called for backup, and caught them on the point of lighting a fire. They were arrested. Their room was searched, and the diaries, filled with stories of fires and theft, were discovered. Two days later, the twins were sent to the Pucklechurch Remand Centre, ten miles from Bristol, where they remained for seven months while the judicial system tried to decide what to do with them.

"One of the things that are so provocative about the twins is that they absolutely challenged society to put them away," the filmmaker Jon Amiel, who directed the 1986 BBC docudrama "The Silent Twins," told me. We were sitting in a café, in Highgate, London, where I had stopped on my way to Wales. "I looked in their bedroom in Haverfordwest, and it was this tiny little army-barracks room—they slept in a tiny box of a room in two bunk beds. So guess what happens when they are put in jail: they are put in a tiny room with two bunk beds. What I am saying is that they re-created a place of safety for themselves. They were desperate to be caught, and, I think, desperate for the place of safety the imprisonment was. . . . What was fascinating about the twins was how voluntary and intensely aggressive their strategy was in the world."

The twins' social isolation seems to have had as much to do with their willfulness as it did with their outrageous misfortune. They occasionally tried to change—they once enrolled in a correspondence course called the Art of Conversation—but those small steps rarely led to larger ones. Their blind determination found its match in some of the people who had responsibility for them. Evan Davies, for example, attributed his failure to distinguish between the girls to the "cultural gap." John Rees saw them not as desperate human beings but as "little Negresses" or "zombies." When he visited Gloria and Aubrey and was confronted with their denial of the girls'



SHOWCASE BY JESSICA CRAIG-MARTIN *The artist's shots of swanky affairs in places like Southampton and L.A. appear in "Party Pictures: From Studio 54 to Cannes 2000," at Lawrence Rubin Greenberg Van Doren, from December 13th.*

oddness, he settled for an easy explanation. According to Wallace, he had heard that West Indian families "expect strange behavior from twins, and he thought their lack of concern was probably cultural." A report sent to Cathy Arthur by the Haverfordwest County Secondary School suggested that the girls' speech could not be understood because they were speaking an "African" dialect. All this says less about prejudice than it does about the human ability to see only what one expects to see.

At Pucklechurch, the twins were confined together, and their bond became a torment. Neither could stand the smell, the sight, the thought of the other. Each began to desire the other's death, to long to breathe singly in a twinless world. Just feet away from Jennifer in the cell they shared, June wrote:

> One of us is plotting to kill one of us. A thud on the head on a cool evening, dragging the lifeless body, digging a secret grave. I'm in a dangerous situation, a scheming, insidious plot. How will it end? . . . I'm in enslavement to her. This creature who lounges in this cell, who is with me every hour of my living soul.
>
> We have become fatal enemies in each other's eyes. . . . We scheme, we plot and who will win? . . . A deadly day is getting closer each minute, coming to a point of imminent death like hands creeping out against the night sky, intentions of evil, blood, a knife, a mincer. . . . I say to myself, how can I get rid of my own shadow? Impossible or not impossible? Without my shadow would I die? Without my shadow would I gain life?

When they were together, they wanted to kill each other. When they were apart, they were so lonely they wanted to die. Then, when they were reunited, they were disappointed and imagined that they had felt stronger alone.

In the spring of 1982, a psychiatrist named William Spry was enlisted by the twins' defense lawyer to evaluate their condition. "The first two visits, we didn't get anywhere—they didn't speak at all," Spry told me. "After that, I asked them if they would talk to me on the telephone. I sat in another room, and I got the odd murmur from them. Then I eventually got them to agree to talk to me face to face. One having started to talk, they went into the most enormous fight between themselves. They were scratching each other, they were trying to tear each other's eyes out. The nurse had to go and stop them." Eventually, he diagnosed the twins as having a psychopathic personality disorder and proposed that they be sent to Broadmoor, England's notorious maximum-security hospital for the criminally insane. The twins were in need of treatment, he reasoned, and no other institution was willing to take on patients with a history of arson. "If we hadn't found a hospital for them, they would have gone to prison, and I thought that was the worst possible thing," he added.

Tim Thomas disagreed. "The youngest person at Broadmoor at that time was twenty-seven," he told me. "They were putting a label on these *children*—that is what I thought they were—as psychopaths. How the hell can you decide that somebody has a mental-health problem as serious as that if you don't communicate with them? Expediency. Had they been white and middle-class, the outcome would have been different."

The girls were tried, in May, 1982, on sixteen joint counts of burglary, theft, and arson. They pleaded guilty, on the advice of their lawyers, and were ordered to be detained at Broadmoor indefinitely.

"The words kept on going round my mind," June wrote in her diary, after the sentencing. She went on:

> Spinning in circles. Sick. Mental. Psychopathic. Imagine how I felt. Me? A mental psychopath? . . . A dangerous, evil, ruthless criminal! Me! At last my torment, my self-consciousness, my violence is known. I am labelled! Ah! Now I know my fate! June Alison Gibbons, aged just 19, going down in history as a psychopath.

Looking ahead to their new life at Broadmoor, Jennifer wrote:

> Please God! Don't let me suffer as much in my new life as I have here. Let me be bold enough to speak openly. Let me trust the doctors and nurses and no longer be afraid of people. For the past seven months I have been a soul with no hope. Don't let this disease paralyze me again, destroying my abilities, tying up my tongue like firewood.

For weeks, the girls had fantasized about Broadmoor, which doctors had described to them in terms more appropriate to an English Eden than to a prison hospital. "We wanted to get away from our life," June told me. "We thought Broadmoor was going to be like paradise."

I visited Broadmoor in the winter of '98, travelling by train some thirty miles east of London to Crowthorne, a dismal little station with no ticket window or concession stand. No one who got off the train with me could tell me when there would be a return train. I called a cab and waited for it in front of a funeral parlor on what I took to be the town's main street, which was about the

CINEMAPLEX
THE CALM BEFORE THE
CHRISTMAS DELUGE OF
(OH, PLEASE, GOD, PLEASE...)
MEGA-BLOCKBUSTERS

YOU'RE FIRED
WEYANT

length of a New York City block. I had arranged to meet Alison Farrar, Broadmoor's head librarian, at the hospital library. She had silver hair and was wearing a dark cardigan, large glasses, and a determinedly chipper expression. She arrived a little late, and out of breath, and handed me a file that contained press clippings on Broadmoor's more famous patients. There were articles about Ronald Kray, the legendary mobster; there were articles about murderers and serial rapists; and there were articles about June and Jennifer Gibbons, the girls memorialized in fading black-and-white newspaper images. When I had finished reading, Farrar drove me around the grounds in a little red car. After acres of farmland, grazing sheep, and low gray skies, she pointed to a field that had been tilled recently. "That was rhubarb planted over there," she told me. "At one time, rhubarb was thought to clean the body, which led to a clear mind. Can you imagine?"

Tim Thomas had taken Aubrey and Gloria to Broadmoor for their first visit, in 1982. "That was horrifying," Thomas told me. "All the doors opening and shutting behind you. They were almost treating the people in there like exhibits. All the promises—like no drug therapy—those were overturned within weeks. I didn't fight hard enough. Would I do it differently if I ever did it again? I'm not sure. I feel enormous sadness. It was a terrible, dark inevitability."

Days after the twins arrived at the hospital, June slipped into a torpor. A few weeks later, she attempted suicide. Jennifer attacked a nurse. They were put in separate wards and were denied access to each other for a time. They were nineteen when they entered Broadmoor. Both girls had longed for marriage and children of their own. For a month, June wouldn't speak at all; later, she would often respond to questions with an infuriating smile. When Jennifer tried to communicate, she was not understood. She was given regular injections of Depixol, an anti-psychotic drug that caused her vision to blur and made it hard for her to read or write. June was given other anti-psychotic medications. Their family rarely visited. "We are forgotten, faded away, never to be seen again," June wrote. "J. and I are two twins of history; coloured girls. Life will go on outside, passing away. . . . Where are we now, they will say?"

Nearly twelve years passed, punctuated by flirtations with male inmates and games over who could eat more or less. The twins could not understand why they weren't released after a few years of this "treatment." But the doctors and social workers who reviewed their case every few years decided that they needed another year or two. "Juvenile delinquents get two years in prison," June said. "We got twelve years of hell, because we didn't speak. We had to work hard to get out. We went to the doctor. We said, 'Look, they wanted us to talk, we're talking now.' He said, 'You're not getting out. You're going to be here for thirty years.' We lost hope, really. I wrote a letter to the Home Office. I wrote a letter to the Queen, asking her to pardon us, to get us out. But we were trapped."

At times, Jennifer was overcome with despair. "She became really schizophrenic in there," June told me. "She'd hear guns going off outside her window. She kept saying quotations from the Bible to me. She accused me of destroying her life, of plotting against her—'You spiked my drink, didn't you?' After a while, they put us together on the same ward, to see how we'd get on, and that was a disaster. We were fighting for days, kicking and biting and scratching for eight months. They split us up, and she was crying then. Even though we were fighting, we loved each other. We were surprised at our actions: 'I'm sorry I hit you, I love you, let's start again, let's call it quits, let's have a heart-to-heart.' "

Marjorie Wallace, who was then a reporter for the London Sunday *Times*, was alerted to the twins' story through a friend of Tim Thomas's. She visited June and Jennifer at Pucklechurch, in 1982, after gaining the confidence of Aubrey and Gloria, who handed over the girls' diaries and writing, still in the black garbage bags that the police had used to hold everything confiscated from the twins' room. In those bags Wallace discovered far more than she had anticipated. "The twins had been sort of written off for being strange, almost of subnormal intelligence," Wallace told me. "But I can still quote large passages—very powerful imagery. It was the poetry and lyricism that made me cry."

Like heroines of the nineteenth-century novels they would have loved to write, the twins had no economic power, and therefore no freedom. And, as two of the most invisible members even of their own class and race, they seized on self-invention as an escape. Their strength as writers lies not in technical skill but in emotion, immediacy, and isolation—the lack of outside influence or guidance.

No contemporary author has described the process of colored girls looking at each other and struggling with, and against, what they are supposed to be more brilliantly than Toni Morrison. In "The Bluest Eye," Morrison wrote about a black girl who is driven mad by rejection and imagines for herself what she cannot have: blue eyes—eyes through which the world will see her better, eyes that will separate her from her commu-

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nity. She looks in the mirror and becomes two people, who bicker and criticize and support each other, like twins:

> *How do you know nobody talks to me?*
> They don't. When you're in the house with me, even Mrs. Breedlove doesn't say anything to you. Ever. . . .
> *Maybe she doesn't feel too good since Cholly's gone. . . . She probably misses him.*
> I don't know why she would. All he did was get drunk and beat her up.
> *Well, you know how grown-ups are.*
> Yes. No. How are they?
> *Well, she probably loved him anyway.*
> HIM?
> *Sure. Why not? Anyway, if she didn't love him, she sure let him do it to her a lot.*
> That's nothing. . . . She didn't like it.
> *Then why'd she let him do it to her.*
> Because he made her?

To be this frank about one's humanity, sexuality, and racial characteristics is rare in the black community. One risks being considered "dirty," "loud," or disloyal to one's "people." The implicit message: Don't be too colored! Never tell the white person who you really are! June and Jennifer, who did not speak out loud, tore that white tape off their mouths. Their stories, poems, and diaries are relentlessly searching and revealing, reminiscent of the work of the confessional poets, who drank, fucked, and killed themselves on and off the page with adolescent verve. George Sand once said that "writing a journal implies that one has ceased to think of the future and has decided to live wholly in the present." The twins had nowhere to live but the present, with all its boredom, banality, and horror, and they cultivated what they had, drop by drop.

In the diaries, Wallace found nothing to indicate that the twins were psychopathic. She quickly became their most vocal advocate, and the chief custodian of their biographies. Through her articles, the twins, who had longed for publicity at their trial, became a cause célèbre in British mental-health and journalistic circles. They were widely touted as symbols: of the ineptitude and cruelty of the English judicial system; of racism in Britain; of many things other than themselves—not unlike the nineteenth-century black Siamese twins Millie and Christine McCoy, two singing ex-slaves who performed all over the United States under the billing "The Two-Headed Nightingale," a sideshow meant to be seen and forgotten.

June and Jennifer were nearly thirty years old when they were released from Broadmoor, on the morning of March 9, 1993. They were being sent to the Caswell Clinic, a minimum-security institution in southwest Wales. On the bus, Jennifer rested her head on her twin's shoulder and said, "At long last we're out." Less than twelve hours later, she was dead. Her heart had been weakened by an undiagnosed inflammation. That night, June wrote in her diary, "Today my beloved twin sister Jennifer died. She is dead. Her heart stopped beating. She will never recognize me. Mom and Dad came to see her body. I kissed her stone-coloured face. I went hysterical with grief."

"We prayed for forgiveness, but, of course, He didn't forgive us," June told me. "He punished us for twelve years. He hated us. He didn't listen to us. We suffered. And, at the end of it all, what does it mean, if she died?"

June was released from Caswell a year after Jennifer's death. She takes medication every day, and is able to talk, though at times it is still difficult to understand her. When she is excited or amused, her speech is rapid and thick. She is thirty-seven. Every Tuesday, she visits her sister's grave. "I was born a twin, and I'll die a twin," June told Lichtenstein. "That's the way it goes."

The halfway house she is living in when I visit (she has since moved to her own apartment) is like all the other houses on the street: two stories high, painted white, and surrounded by patches of damp green. She shares the small, tidy building with a number of other patients who are also living in that purgatory known as rehabilitation. She proudly shows me one of her drawings, hanging on the door to her room: a girl with braids and a dark face. Underneath the drawing is the name Alison spelled in different-colored letters. June tells me that she now prefers to be called by her middle name, because she has had so much bad luck under her first name: "That name brought me more than grief. Alison's a fresh start, never suffering." She opens the door to her bedroom with a flourish. "Here is my sanctuary," she says. It's a small room with a large window looking out onto a garden. The bed is large, with a cheap polyester spread covering it, and opposite is a brown easy chair. There is also a television, a wastebasket full of cigarette butts, and, against the wall, an electric keyboard. No books.

As I sit down, June moves about the room with deliberate slowness. She seems not to know quite how to navigate in a world that doesn't involve walking beside, behind, or around her sister—or in one that requires her to accommodate visitors.

Over tea, she tells me what she wants out of life now: "What I want is to get married and have children. But it's a bit late now. It's funny. All my family are married to white people—David, Greta, Rosie. All the kids are mixed race. Kinky blond hair and pale skin. I want black kids. I want a Rasta man, with Rasta hair, like Bob Marley. My mum says, 'Oh, no, they're low class—they're not decent people.' But I like them."

She laughs, covering her teeth with her lips and huddling over her teacup, which she holds stiffly in front of her. I realize that she is telling me a fantasy she had about me—and against which I come up short. I have close-cropped hair, no dreadlocks. I registered her slight look of disappointment when we met.

We talk about Broadmoor, and I ask her if she did a lot of reading there.

Her face lights up. "Oh yeah, my Lord, I read thousands of books in there. I read myself dry in Broadmoor. D. H. Lawrence, I like him; Oscar Wilde; Dylan Thomas; Emily Brontë; the woman who wrote 'Frankenstein,' Mary Shelley; all the classics. I wrote five books—manuscripts. They're not very professional, though, they're a bit all over the place."

"Do you still write?"

"It seems to me that as I get older I don't want to write anymore," she says. "I don't see the point in writing books now. I can communicate by talking now, can't I? I stopped writing diaries way back. I'm a bit lazy now. Brain dead. I can't be bothered to write books."

I say, "I wish you would write more."

Flirtatiously, she shoots back, "Maybe you'll inspire me to write. I could write if I wanted to. I could see the dawn coming and get up and start writing. It's hard work to be a writer, isn't it? I want an easy job, an easy life. . . . Do you know something?" she interrupts herself suddenly. "I could sleep for ten days if I wanted to. I like dreaming. I see my sister in my dreams, talking to me."

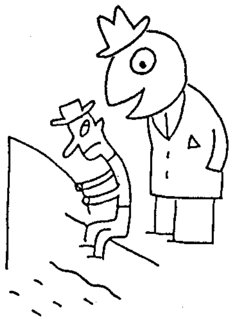
The name Jennifer means "white dove," she adds. "I used to miss her," June says. "Now I've accepted her. She's in me. She makes me stronger. I accept the fact that she's gone now. That took me five years of grieving, crying all the time. Now all my tears are gone, they all dried up inside my eyes. . . . I don't get lonely now. I've got her, haven't I?"

"Have you enjoyed your visit?" she asks before I leave. "Did you expect me to look different, with plaits in my hair?"

The next morning, I take a drive around Haverfordwest. My driver is familiar with the story of the twins. He knows that their parents, who now refuse all interviews, live in a section of the town known as the Bronx. (The nickname dates from years ago, when the neighborhood was home to much of the town's unemployed population.) The Bronx is another row of identical low-ceilinged houses. It is not far from the graveyard, where I spend a few minutes at Jennifer's grave. Cold dew and thick grass cover everything. A stone identifies Jennifer as a daughter and a twin, but doesn't mention her three other siblings. It is also inscribed with one of June's poems:

We once were two
We two made one
We no more two
Through life be one
Rest in peace.

An hour later, I'm back in June's room. She wonders whether I've had trouble at my hotel. "They're not used to seeing black people in Haverfordwest. Did they give you a nice room, or a horrible room because you're black?" she asks. "They treat you second best. I'm used to it now. I go about my business." She reminisces about a black boyfriend she had at Broadmoor. "We had a lot in common, me and Morris did," she says. "Morris would sit in a corner, and he had dreadlocks. I liked him. I liked his face. [Jennifer] would say to Morris, 'You're not me. I'm June's twin, not you.' Jennifer thought I loved Morris more than her." Morris is still in Broadmoor and phones her from time to time, June tells me. Then she shows me photographs of Jennifer and herself from those days. The girls wear a variety of costumes and hair styles—heavily rouged cheeks, lots of silver bangles in one, berets and turbans in another. Two young women making something of themselves in front of the camera. "You know what we were known as in there?" she asks, proudly. "The Queens of Broadmoor."



When I get back to my hotel, the room is cold, the bedcovers stiff and uncomfortable. Somewhere in half-sleep, with the television on because I feel desolate with the wind blowing outside and the sea mist clotting the streets, I realize that the silent twins' story has upset all my expectations. I feel not unlike the doctor in Chekhov's "Ward No. 6" who, in trying to delineate his patients' madness, must confront the issue of his own will and meaning. The twins are resolutely themselves, and the psychiatrists, social workers, and reporters (myself included) who believed they understood them seem misguided now that I view their ideas next to June.

All of us have a fiercely proprietary relationship to the twins as material. "The story has created conflict from the very beginning, really," Tim Thomas told me. "It seemed to polarize people in a strange way." Even the possession of the girls' diaries and manuscripts is in dispute. Wallace, who is now the director of SANE, a London-based mental-health charity, says that she returned the materials to Broadmoor. June didn't receive them, and it's likely that they were lost in transit or misplaced at the hospital. Wallace says she kept copies of some of the materials, and at one point she offered to show me some of the diary pages she'd transcribed, but she soon withdrew the offer. Wallace fell out with Lichtenstein, who is now a creative director at the BBC. And Judith Hackett, a young black documentarian who first proposed the idea of a film on the twins to the BBC, also fell out with Lichtenstein, who took over the project. Hackett had been compelled to make a documentary on the twins, she told me, because "I'd felt like that, growing up black in London, coming from the West Indies. I could really relate to their story."

The twins' uniqueness was astonishing. So was their universality. Their lives were the tale of a whole that divides and cannot be made one again. And that is—in the Symposium, and in the end—the story of any of us, attempting to be alone together. ♦

FICTION

MAN-EATING CATS

BY HARUKI MURAKAMI

I bought a newspaper at the harbor and came across an article about an old woman who had been eaten by cats. She was seventy years old and lived alone in a small suburb of Athens—a quiet sort of life, just her and her three cats in a small one-room apartment. One day, she suddenly keeled over face down on the sofa—a heart attack, most likely. Nobody knew how long it had taken for her to die after she collapsed. The old woman didn't have any relatives or friends who visited her regularly, and it was a week before her body was discovered. The windows and the door were closed, and the cats were trapped. There wasn't any food in the apartment. Granted, there was probably something in the fridge, but cats haven't evolved to the point where they can open refrigerators. On the verge of starvation, they were forced to devour their owner's flesh.

I read this article to Izumi, who was sitting across from me. On sunny days, we'd walk to the harbor, buy a copy of the Athens English-language newspaper, and order coffee at the café next door to the tax office, and I'd summarize in Japanese anything interesting I might come across. That was the extent of our daily schedule on the island. If something in a particular article caught our interest, we'd bat around opinions for a while. Izumi's English was pretty fluent, and she could easily have read the articles herself. But I never once saw her pick up a paper.

"I like to have someone read to me," she explained. "It's been my dream ever since I was a child—to sit in a sunny place, gaze at the sky or the sea, and have someone read aloud to me. I don't care what they read—a newspaper, a textbook, a novel. It doesn't matter. But no one's ever read to me before. So I suppose that means you're making up for all those lost opportunities. Besides, I love your voice."

We had the sky and the sea there, all right. And I enjoyed reading aloud. When I lived in Japan, I used to read picture books aloud to my son. Reading aloud is different from just following sentences with your eyes. Something quite unexpected wells up in your mind, a kind of indefinable resonance that I find impossible to resist.

Taking the occasional sip of bitter coffee, I slowly read the article to Izumi. I'd read a few lines to myself, mull over how to put them into Japanese, then translate aloud. A few bees popped up from somewhere to lick the jam that a previous customer had spilled on the table. They spent a moment lapping it up, then, as if suddenly remembering something, flew into the air with a ceremonious buzz, circled the table a couple of times, and then—again as if something had jogged their memory—settled once more on the tabletop. After I had finished reading the whole article, Izumi sat there, unmoving, elbows resting on the table. She put the tips of the fingers of her right hand against those of her left to form a tent. I rested the paper on my lap and gazed at her slim hands. She looked at me through the spaces between her fingers.

"Then what happened?" she asked.

"That's it," I replied, and folded up the paper. I took a handkerchief out of my pocket and wiped the flecks of coffee grounds off my lips. "At least, that's all it says."

"But what happened to the cats?"

I stuffed the handkerchief back in my pocket. "I have no idea. It doesn't say."

Izumi pursed her lips to one side, her own little habit. Whenever she was about to give an opinion—which always took the form of a mini-declaration—she pursed her lips like that, as if she were yanking a bed sheet to smooth out a stray wrinkle. When I first met her, I found this habit quite charming.

"Newspapers are all the same, no matter where you go," she finally announced. "They never tell you what you really want to know."

She took a Salem out of its box, put it in her mouth, and struck a match. Every day, she smoked one pack of Salems—no more, no less. She'd open a new pack in the morning and smoke it up by the end of the day. I didn't smoke. My wife had made me quit, five years earlier, when she was pregnant.

"What I really want to know," Izumi began, the smoke from her cigarette silently curling up into the air, "is what happened to the cats afterward. Did the authorities kill them because they'd eaten human flesh? Or did they say, 'You guys have had a tough time of it,' give them a pat on the head, and send them on their way? What do you think?"

I gazed at the bees hovering over the table and thought about it. For a fleeting instant, the restless little bees licking up the jam and the three cats devouring the old woman's flesh became one in my mind. A distant seagull's shrill squawk overlapped the buzzing of the bees, and for a second or two my consciousness strayed on the border between reality and the unreal. Where was I? What was I doing here? I couldn't get a purchase on the situation. I took a deep breath, gazed up at the sky, and turned to Izumi.

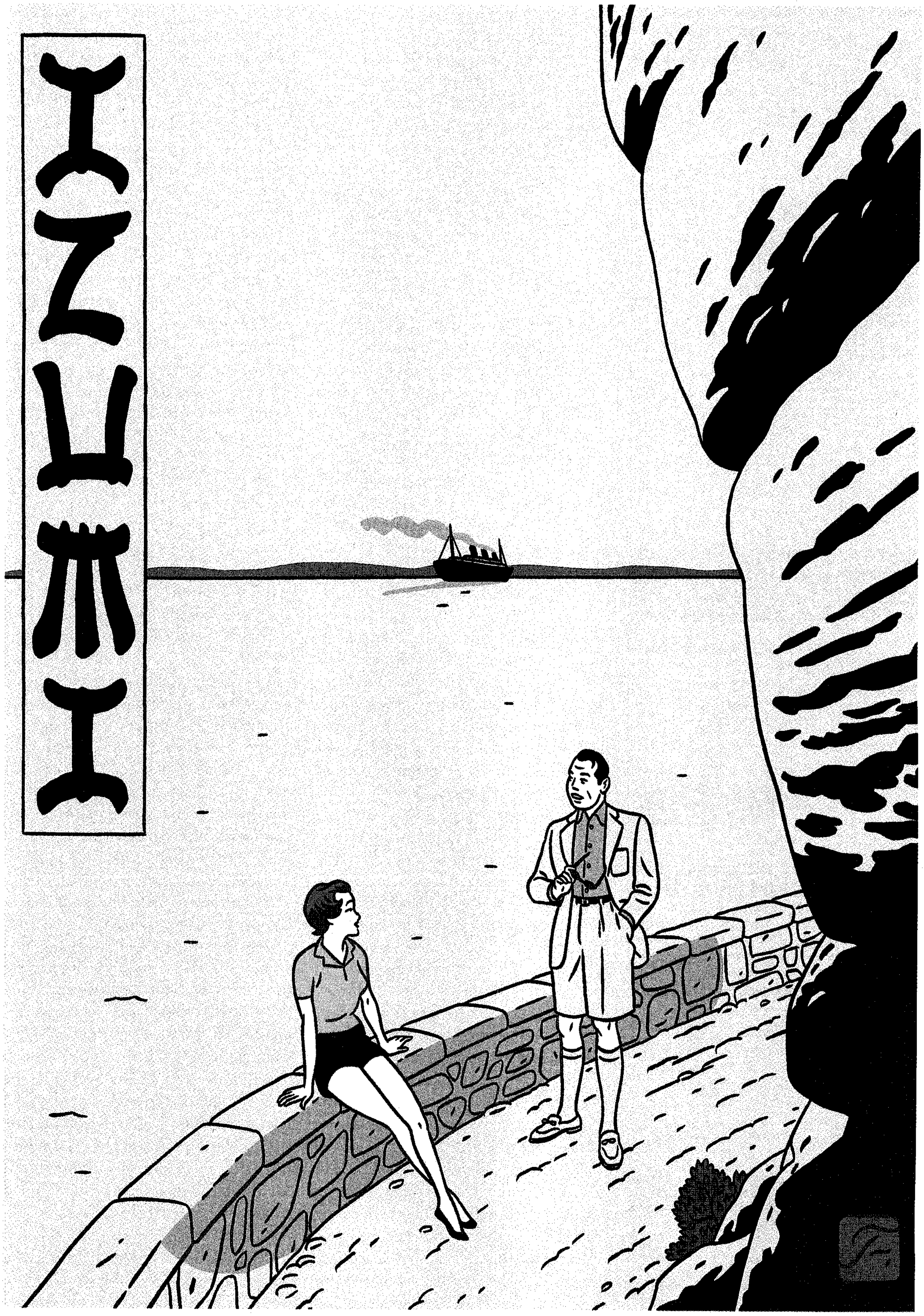
"I have no idea."

"Think about it. If you were that town's mayor or chief of police, what would you do with those cats?"

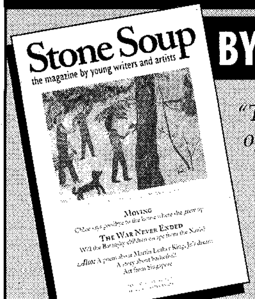
"How about putting them in an institution to reform them?" I said. "Turn them into vegetarians."

Izumi didn't laugh. She took a drag on her cigarette and ever so slowly let out a stream of smoke. "That story reminds me of a lecture I heard just after I started at my Catholic junior high school. Did I tell you I went to a very strict Catholic school? Just after the entrance ceremony, one of the head nuns had us all assemble in an auditorium, and then she went up to the podium and gave a talk about Catholic doctrine. She told us a lot of things, but what I remember most—actually, the only thing I remember—is this story about being ship-

JEAN CLAUDE FLOCH


IZUMI

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE BY CHILDREN



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wrecked on a desert island with a cat.”

“Sounds interesting,” I said.

“ ‘You're in a shipwreck,’ she told us. ‘The only ones who make it to the lifeboat are you and a cat. You land on some nameless desert island, and there's nothing there to eat. All you have is enough water and dry biscuits to sustain one person for about ten days.’ She said, ‘All right, everyone, I'd like you to imagine yourselves in this situation. Close your eyes and try to picture it. You're alone on the desert island, just you and the cat. You have almost no food at all. Do you understand? You're hungry, thirsty, and eventually you'll die. What should you do? Should you share your meagre store of food with the cat? No, you should not. That would be a mistake. You are all precious beings, chosen by God, and the cat is not. That's why you should eat all the food yourself.’ The nun gave us this deadly serious look. I was a bit shocked. What could possibly be the point of telling a story like that to kids who'd just started at the school? I thought, Whoa, what kind of place have I got myself into?”

Izumi and I were living in an efficiency apartment on a small Greek island. It was off-season, and the island wasn't exactly a tourist spot, so the rent was cheap. Neither of us had heard of the island before we got there. It lay near the border of Turkey, and on clear days you could just make out the green Turkish mountains. On windy days, the locals joked, you could smell the shish kebab. All joking aside, our island was closer to the Turkish shore than to the next closest Greek island, and there—looming right before our eyes—was Asia Minor.

In the town square, there was a statue of a hero of Greek independence. He had led an insurrection on the Greek mainland and planned an uprising against the Turks, who controlled the island then. But the Turks captured him and put him to death. They set up a sharpened stake in the square beside the harbor, stripped the hapless hero naked, and lowered him onto it. The weight of his body drove the stake through his anus and then the rest of his body until it finally came out of his mouth—an incredibly slow, excruciating way to die. The statue was erected on the spot where this was supposed to have happened. When it was first built, it must have been impressive, but now, what with the sea wind, dust, and seagull droppings, you could barely make out the man's features. The locals hardly gave the shabby statue a passing glance, and for his part the hero looked as though he'd turned his back on the people, the island, the world.

When Izumi and I sat at our outdoor café, drinking coffee or beer, aimlessly gazing at the boats in the harbor and at the far-off Turkish hills, we were sitting at the edge of Europe. The wind was the wind at the edge of the world. An inescapable retro color filled the place. It made me feel as if I were being quietly swallowed up by an alien reality, something foreign and just out of reach, vague yet strangely gentle. And the shadow of that substance colored the faces, the eyes, the skin of the people gathered in the harbor.

At times, I couldn't grasp the fact that I was part of this scene. No matter how much I took in the scenery around me, no matter how much I breathed in the air, there was no organic connection between me and all this.

Two months before, I had been living with my wife and our four-year-old son in a three-bedroom apartment in Unoki, in Tokyo. Not a spacious place, just your basic, functional apartment. My wife and I had our own bedroom, so did our son, and the remaining room served as my study. The apartment was quiet, with a nice view. On weekends, the three of us would take walks along the banks of the Tama River. In spring, the cherry trees by the river would blossom, and I'd put my son on the back of my bike, and we'd go off to watch the Tokyo Giants Triple A team in spring training.

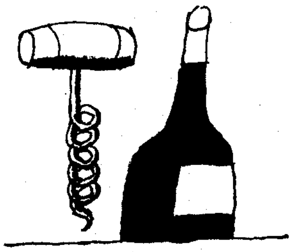
I worked at a medium-sized design company that specialized in book and magazine layouts. Calling me a “designer” makes it sound more interesting than it was, since the work was fairly cut-and-dried. Nothing flamboyant or imaginative. Most of the time, our schedule was a bit too hectic, and several times a month I had to pull an all-nighter at the office. Some of the work bored me to tears. Still, I didn't mind the job, and the company was a relaxed place. Because I had seniority, I was able to pick and choose my assignments and say pretty much whatever I wanted to. My boss was O.K., and I got along with my co-workers. And the salary wasn't half bad. So if nothing had happened, I probably would have stayed with the company for the foreseeable future. And my life, like the Moldau River—or, more precisely, the nameless water that makes up the Moldau River—would have continued to flow, ever so swiftly, into the sea.

But then I met Izumi.

Izumi was ten years younger than I was. We met at a business meeting. Something clicked between us the first time we laid eyes on each other. Not the kind of thing that happens all that often. We met a couple of times after that, to go over the details of our joint project. I'd go to her office, or she'd drop by mine. Our meetings were always short, other people were involved, and it was basically all business. When our project was finished, though, a terrible loneliness swept over me, as if something absolutely vital had been forcibly snatched from my grasp. I hadn't felt like that in years. And I think she felt the same way.

A week later, she phoned my office about some minor matter and we chatted for a bit. I told a joke, and she laughed. "Want to go out for a drink?" I asked. We went to a small bar and had a few drinks. I can't recall exactly what we talked about, but we found a million topics and could have talked forever. With a laserlike clarity, I could grasp everything she wanted to say. And things I couldn't explain well to anyone else came across to her with an exactness that took me by surprise. We were both married, with no major complaints about our married lives. We loved our spouses and respected them. Still, this was on the order of a minor miracle—running across someone to whom you can express your feelings so clearly, so completely. Most people go their entire lives without meeting a person like that. It would have been a mistake to label this "love." It was more like total empathy.

We started going out regularly for drinks. Her husband's job kept him out late, so she was free to come and go as she pleased. When we got together, though, the time just flew by. We'd look at our watches and discover that we could barely make the last train. It was always hard for me to say goodbye. There was so much more we wanted to tell each other.



Neither one of us lured the other to bed, but we did start sleeping together. We'd both been faithful to our spouses up to that point, but somehow we didn't feel guilty, for the simple reason that we had to do it. Undressing her, caressing her skin, holding her close, slipping inside her, coming—it was all just a natural extension of our conversations. So natural that our lovemaking was not a source of heartrending physical pleasure; it was just a calm, pleasant act, stripped of all pretense. Best of all were our quiet talks in bed after sex. I'd hold her naked body close, and she'd curl up in my arms, and we'd whisper secrets in our own private language.

We met whenever we could. Strangely enough, or perhaps not so strangely, we were absolutely convinced that our relationship could go on forever, our married lives on one side of the equation, our own relationship on the other, with no problems arising. We were convinced that our affair would never come to light. Sure we had sex, but how was that hurting anyone? On nights when I slept with Izumi, I'd get home late and have to make up some lie to tell my wife, and I did feel a pang of conscience, but it never seemed to be an actual betrayal. Izumi and I had a strictly compartmentalized yet totally intimate relationship.

And, if nothing had happened, maybe we would have continued like that forever, sipping our vodka-and-tonics, slipping between the sheets whenever we could. Or maybe we would have got tired of lying to our spouses and decided to let the affair die a natural death so that we could return to our comfortable little life styles. Either way, I don't think things would have turned out badly. I can't prove it; I just have that feeling. But a twist of fate—inevitable, in retrospect—intervened, and Izumi's husband got wind of our affair. After grilling her, he barged into my home, totally out of control. As luck would have it, my wife was alone at the time, and the whole thing turned ugly. When I got home, she demanded that I explain what was going on. Izumi had already admitted everything, so I couldn't very well make up some story. I told my wife exactly what had happened. "It's not like I'm in love," I explained. "It's

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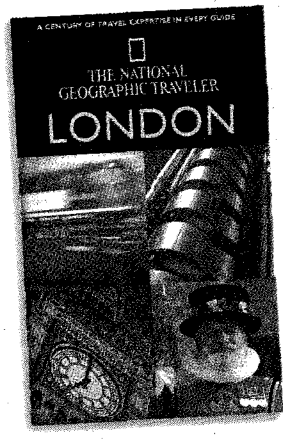
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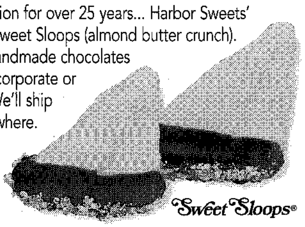

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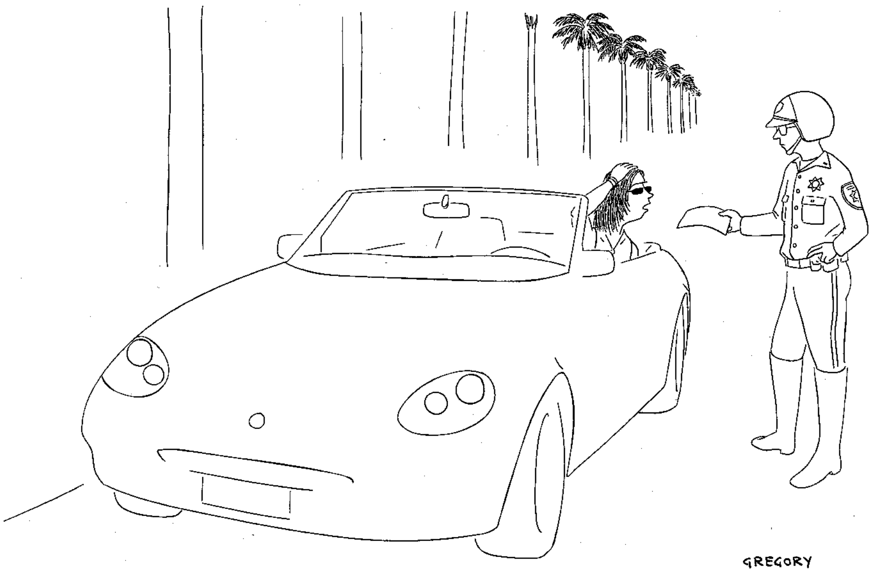

"This is so unexpected—I didn't even prepare a speech."

• •

a special relationship, but completely different from what I have with you. Like night and day. You haven't detected anything going on, right? That proves it's not the kind of affair you're imagining."

But my wife refused to listen. It was a shock, and she froze and literally wouldn't speak another word to me. The next day, she packed all her things in the car and drove to her parents' place, in Chigasaki, taking our son with her. I called a couple of times, but she wouldn't come to the phone. Her father came on instead. "I don't want to hear any of your lame excuses," he warned, "and there's no way I'm going to let my daughter go back to a bastard like you." He'd been dead set against our marriage from the start, and his tone of voice said he'd finally been proved right.

At a complete loss, I took a few days off and just lay forlornly alone in bed. Izumi phoned me. She was alone, too. Her husband had left her, as well, but not before slapping her around a bit. He had taken a pair of scissors to every stitch of clothing she owned. From her overcoat to her underwear, it all lay in tatters. She had no idea where he had gone. "I'm exhausted," she said. "I don't know what to do. Everything is ruined, and it'll never be the same again. He's never coming back." She sobbed over the phone. She and her husband had been high-school sweethearts. I wanted to comfort her, but what could I possibly say?

"Let's go somewhere and have a drink," she finally suggested. We went to Shibuya and drank until dawn at an all-night bar. Vodka gimlets for me, Daiquiris for her. I lost track of how much we drank. For the first time since we'd met, we didn't have much to say. At dawn, we worked off the liquor by walking over to Harajuku, where we had coffee and breakfast at a Denny's. That's when she brought up the idea of going to Greece.

"Greece?" I asked.

"We can't very well stay in Japan," she said, looking deep into my eyes.

I turned the idea around in my mind. Greece? My vodka-soaked brain couldn't follow the logic.

"I've always wanted to go to Greece," she said. "It's been my dream. I wanted to go on my honeymoon, but we didn't have enough money. So let's go—the two of us. And just live there, you know, with no worries about anything. Staying in Japan's just going to depress us, and nothing good will come of it."

I didn't have any particular interest in Greece, but I had to agree with her. We calculated how much money we had between us. She had two and a half million yen in savings, while I could come up with about one and a half million. Four million yen altogether—about forty thousand dollars.

"Forty thousand dollars should last us a few years in the Greek countryside," Izumi said. "Discount plane tickets would set us back around four thousand.

That leaves thirty-six. Figure a thousand a month, and that's enough for three years. Two and a half, to be on the safe side. What do you say? Let's go. We'll let things sort themselves out later on."

I looked around. The early-morning Denny's was crowded with young couples. We were the only couple over thirty. And surely the only couple discussing taking all our money and fleeing to Greece after a disastrous affair. What a mess, I thought. I gazed at the palm of my hand for the longest time. Was this really what my life had come to?

"All right," I said finally. "Let's do it."

At work the next day, I handed in my letter of resignation. My boss had heard rumors and decided that it was best to put me on extended leave for the time being. My colleagues were startled to hear that I wanted to quit, but no one tried very hard to talk me out of it. Quitting a job is not so difficult, after all, I discovered. Once you make up your mind to get rid of something, there's very little you can't discard. No—not very little. Once you put your mind to it, there's nothing you can't get rid of. And once you start tossing things out, you find yourself wanting to get rid of everything. It's as if you'd gambled away almost all your money and decided, What the hell, I'll bet what's left. Too much trouble to cling to the rest.

I packed everything I thought I'd need into one medium-sized blue Samsonite suitcase. Izumi took about the same amount of baggage.

As we were flying over Egypt, I was suddenly gripped by a terrible fear that someone else had taken my bag by mistake. There had to be tens of thousands of identical blue Samsonite bags in the world. Maybe I'd get to Greece, open up the suitcase, and find it stuffed with someone else's possessions. A severe anxiety attack swept over me. If the suitcase got lost, there would be nothing left to link me to my own life—just Izumi. I suddenly felt as if I had vanished. It was the weirdest sensation. The person sitting on that plane was no longer me. My brain had mistakenly attached itself to some convenient packaging that looked like me. My mind was in utter chaos. I had to go back to Japan and get back inside my real body. But here I was in a jet, flying over Egypt, and there was no turning back. This flesh I was temporarily occupying felt as if it

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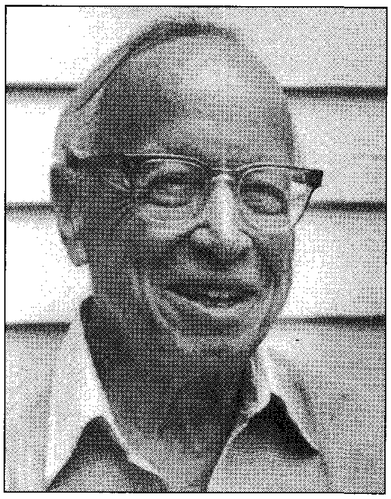

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were made out of plaster. If I scratched myself, pieces would flake off. I began to shiver uncontrollably, and I couldn't stop. I knew that if these shakes continued much longer the body I was in would crack apart and turn to dust. The plane was air-conditioned, but I broke out in a sweat. My shirt stuck to my skin. An awful smell arose from me. All the while, Izumi held my hand tightly and gave me the occasional hug. She didn't say a word, but she knew how I was feeling. The shakes went on for a good half hour. I wanted to die—to stick the barrel of a revolver in my ear and pull the trigger, so that both my mind and my flesh would turn to dust.

After the shakes subsided, though, I suddenly felt lighter. I relaxed my tense shoulders and gave myself up to the flow of time. I fell into a deep sleep, and, when I opened my eyes, there below me lay the azure waters of the Aegean.

The biggest problem facing us on the island was an almost total lack of things to do. We didn't work, we had no friends. The island had no movie theatres or tennis courts or books to read. We'd left Japan so abruptly that I had completely forgotten to bring books. I read two novels I'd picked up at the airport, and a copy of Aeschylus' tragedies that Izumi had brought along. I read them all twice. To cater to tourists, the kiosk at the harbor stocked a few English paperbacks, but nothing caught my eye. Reading was my passion, and I'd always imagined that if I had free time I'd wallow in books, but, ironically, here I was—with all the time in the world and nothing to read.

Izumi started studying Greek. She'd brought along a Greek-language text, and made a chart of verb conjugations that she carried around, reciting the verbs aloud like a spell. She got to the point where she was able to talk to the shopkeepers in her broken Greek, and to the waiters when we stopped by the café, so we managed to make a few acquaintances. Not to be outdone, I dusted off my French. I figured it would come in handy someday, but on this seedy little island I never ran across a soul who spoke French. In town, we were able to get by with English. Some of the old people knew Italian or German. French, though, was useless.

With nothing much to do, we walked everywhere. We tried fishing in the harbor but didn't catch a thing. Lack of fish wasn't the problem; it was that the water was too clear. Fish could see all the way from the hook up to the face of the person trying to catch them. You'd have to be a pretty dumb fish to get caught that way. I bought a sketchbook and a set of watercolors at a local shop and tramped around the island sketching the scenery and the people. Izumi would sit beside me, looking at my paintings, memorizing her Greek conjugations. Local people often came to watch me sketch. To kill time, I'd draw their portraits, which seemed to be a big hit. If I gave them the picture, they'd often treat us to a beer. Once, a fisherman gave us a whole octopus.

"You could make a living doing portraits," Izumi said. "You're good, and you could make a nice little business out of it. Play up the fact that you're a Japanese artist. Can't be many of them around here."

I laughed, but her expression was serious. I pictured myself trekking around the Greek isles, picking up spare change drawing portraits, enjoying the occasional free beer. Not such a bad idea, I concluded.

"And I'll be a tour coördinator for Japanese tourists," Izumi continued. "There should be more of them as time goes by, and that will help make ends meet. Of course, that means I'll have to get serious about learning Greek."

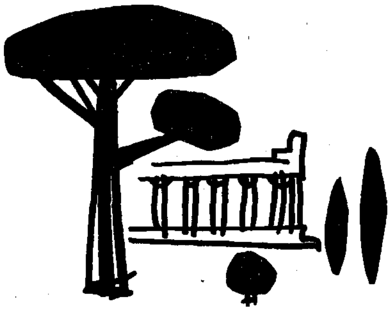
"Do you really think we can spend two and a half years doing nothing?" I asked.

"As long as we don't get robbed or sick or something. Barring the unforeseen, we should be able to get by. Still, it's always good to prepare for the unexpected."

Until then, I'd almost never been to a doctor, I told her.

Izumi stared straight at me, pursed her lips, and moved them to one side.

"Say I got pregnant," she began. "What would you do? You protect yourself the best you can, but people make mistakes. If that happened, our money would run out pretty quick."



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"If it comes to that, we should probably go back to Japan," I said.

"You don't get it, do you?" she said quietly. "We can never go back to Japan."

Izumi continued her study of Greek, I my sketching. This was the most peaceful time in my whole life. We ate simply and carefully sipped the cheapest wines. Every day, we'd climb a nearby hill. There was a small village on top, and from there we could see other islands far away. With all the fresh air and exercise, I was soon in good shape. After the sun set on the island, you couldn't hear a sound. And in that silence Izumi and I would quietly make love and talk about all kinds of things. No more worrying about making the last train, or coming up with lies to tell our spouses. It was wonderful beyond belief. Autumn deepened bit by bit, and early winter came on. The wind picked up, and there were whitecaps in the sea.

It was around this time that we read the story about the man-eating cats. In the same paper, there was a report about the Japanese emperor's condition worsening, but we'd bought it only to check on exchange rates. The yen was continuing to gain against the drachma. This was vital for us; the stronger the yen, the more money we had.

"Speaking of cats," I said, a few days after we'd read the article, "when I was a child I had a cat who disappeared in the strangest way."

Izumi seemed to want to hear more. She lifted her face from her conjugation chart and looked at me. "How so?"

"I was in second, maybe third grade. We lived in a company house that had a big garden. There was this ancient pine tree in the garden, so tall you could barely see the top of it. One day, I was sitting on the back porch reading a book, while our tortoiseshell cat was playing in the garden. The cat was leaping about by itself, the way cats do sometimes. It was all worked up about something, completely oblivious of the fact that I was watching it. The longer I watched, the more frightened I became. The cat seemed possessed, jumping around, its fur standing on end. It was as if it saw something that I couldn't. Finally, it started racing around and around the pine tree, just like the tiger in 'Little Black Sambo.' Then it screeched to an abrupt halt and scrambled up the tree to the highest branches. I could just make

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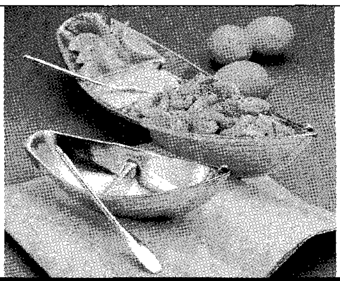

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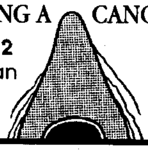

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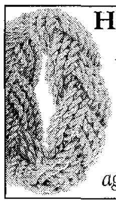

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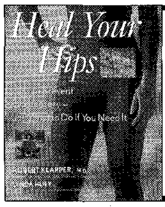

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out its little face way up in the topmost branches. The cat was still excited and tense. It was hiding in the branches, staring out at something. I called its name, but it acted like it didn't hear me."

"What was the cat's name?" Izumi asked.

"I forget," I told her. "Gradually, evening came on, and it grew darker. I was worried and waited for a long time for the cat to climb down. Finally, it got pitch dark. And we never saw the cat again."

"That's not so unusual," Izumi said. "Cats often disappear like that. Especially when they're in heat. They get overexcited and then can't remember how to get home. The cat must have come down from the pine tree and gone off somewhere when you weren't watching."

"I suppose," I said. "But I was still a kid then, and I was positive that the cat had decided to live up in the tree. There had to be some reason that it couldn't come down. Every day, I'd sit on the porch and look up at the pine tree, hoping to see the cat peeking out between the branches."

Izumi seemed to have lost interest. She lit her second Salem, then raised her head and looked at me.

"Do you think about your child sometimes?" she asked.

I had no idea how to respond. "Sometimes," I said honestly. "But not all the time. Occasionally something will remind me."

"Don't you want to see him?"

"Sometimes I do," I said. But that was a lie. I just thought that that was the way I was supposed to feel. When I was living with my son, I thought he was the cutest thing I'd ever seen. Whenever I got home late, I'd always go to my son's room first, to see his sleeping face. Sometimes I was seized by a desire to squeeze him so hard he might break. Now everything about him—his face, his voice, his actions—existed in a distant land. All I could recall with any clarity was the smell of his soap. I liked to take baths with him and scrub him. He had sensitive skin, so my wife always kept a special bar of soap just for him. All I could recall about my own son was the smell of that soap.

"If you want to go back to Japan, don't let me stop you," Izumi said. "Don't worry about me. I'd manage somehow."

I nodded. But I knew that it wasn't going to happen.

"I wonder if your child will think of you that way when he's grown up," Izumi said. "Like you were a cat who disappeared up a pine tree."

I laughed. "Maybe so," I said.

Izumi crushed out her cigarette in the ashtray and sighed. "Let's go home and make love, all right?" she said.

"It's still morning," I said.

"What's wrong with that?"

"Not a thing," I said.

Later, when I woke up in the middle of the night, Izumi wasn't there. I looked at my watch next to the bed. Twelve-thirty. I fumbled for the lamp, switched it on, and gazed around the room. Everything was as quiet as if someone had stolen in while I slept and sprinkled silent dust all around. Two bent Salem butts were in the ashtray, a balled-up empty cigarette pack beside them. I got out of bed and walked to the living room. Izumi wasn't there. She wasn't in the kitchen or the bathroom. I opened the door and looked out at the front yard. Just a pair of vinyl lounge chairs, bathed in the brilliant moonlight. "Izumi," I called out in a small voice. Nothing. I called out again, this time more loudly. My heart pounded. Was this my voice? It sounded too loud, unnatural. Still no reply. A faint breeze from the sea rustled the tips of the pampas grass. I shut the door, went back to the kitchen, and poured myself half a glass of wine, to calm down.

Radiant moonlight poured in the kitchen window, throwing weird shadows on the walls and floor. The whole thing looked like the symbolic set of some avant-garde play. I suddenly remembered: the night the cat had disappeared up the pine tree had been exactly like this one, a full moon with not a wisp of cloud. After dinner that night, I'd gone out to the porch again to look for the cat. As the night had deepened, the moonlight had brightened. For some inexplicable reason, I couldn't take my eyes off the pine tree. From time to time I was sure that I could make out the cat's eyes, sparkling between the branches. But it was just an illusion.

I tugged on a thick sweater and a pair of jeans, snatched up the coins on the table, put them in my pocket, and went outside. Izumi must have had trouble sleeping and gone out for a walk. That had to be it. The wind had completely died down. All I could hear was the sound of my tennis shoes crunching along the gravel, like in an exaggerated movie soundtrack. Izumi must have gone to the harbor, I decided. There was nowhere else for her to go. There was only one road to the harbor, so I couldn't miss her. The lights in the houses along the road were all off, the moonlight dyeing the ground silver. It looked like the bottom of the sea.

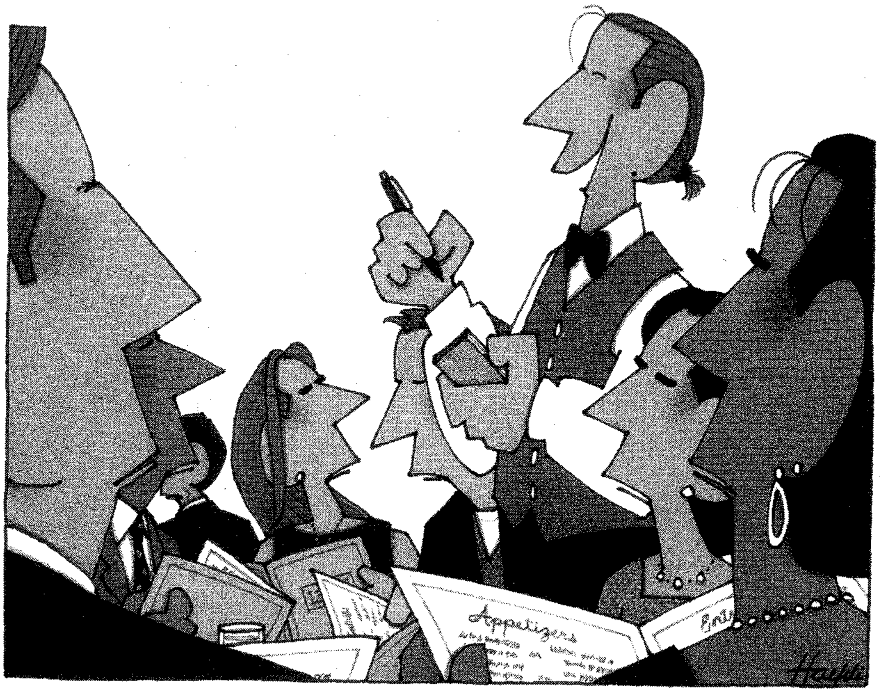
About halfway to the harbor, I heard the faint sound of music and came to a halt. At first I thought it was a hallucination—like when the air pressure changes and you hear a ringing in your ears. But, listening carefully, I was able to make out a melody. I held my breath and listened as hard as I could. No doubt about it, it was music. Somebody playing an instrument. Live, unamplified music. But what kind of instrument was it? The mandolinlike instrument that Anthony Quinn danced to in "Zorba the Greek"? A bouzouki? But who would be playing a bouzouki in the middle of the night? And where?

The music seemed to be coming from the village at the top of the hill we climbed every day for exercise. I stood at the crossroads, wondering what to do, which direction to take. Izumi must have heard the same music at this very spot. And I had a distinct feeling that if she had she would have headed toward it.

I took the plunge and turned right at the crossroads, heading up the slope I knew so well. There were no trees lining the path, just knee-high thorny bushes away in the shadows of the cliffs. The farther I walked the louder and more distinct the music grew. I could make out the melody more clearly, too. There was a festive flashiness to it. I imagined some sort of banquet being held in the village on top of the hill. Then I remembered that earlier that day, at the harbor, we had seen a lively wedding procession. This must be the wedding banquet, going on into the night.

Just then—without warning—I disappeared.

Maybe it was the moonlight, or that midnight music. With each step I took, I felt myself sinking deeper into a quicksand where my identity vanished; it was the same emotion I'd had on the plane, flying over Egypt. This wasn't me walking in the moonlight. It wasn't me but a stand-in, fashioned out of plaster. I rubbed my hand against my face. But it wasn't my face. And it wasn't my hand. My heart pounded in my chest, sending the blood coursing through my body at a crazy speed. This body was a plaster puppet, a voodoo doll into which some sorcerer had breathed a fleeting life. The glow of real life was missing. My make-



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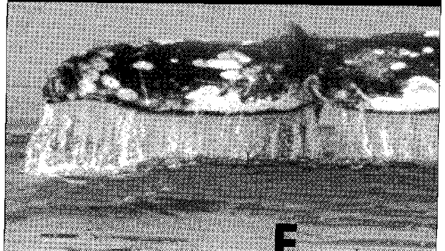

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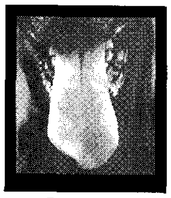

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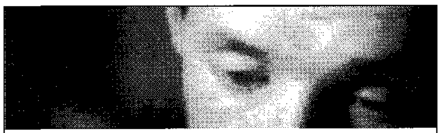

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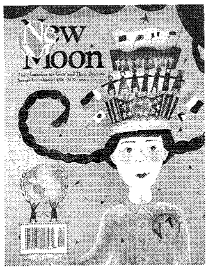

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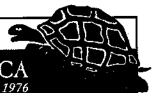

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shift, phony muscles were just going through the motions. I was a puppet, to be used in some sacrifice.

So where is the real me? I wondered.

Suddenly, Izumi's voice came out of nowhere. *The real you has been eaten by the cats. While you've been standing here, those hungry cats have devoured you—eaten you all up. All that's left is bones.*

I looked around. It was an illusion, of course. All I could see was the rock-strewn ground, the low bushes, and their tiny shadows. The voice had been in my head.

Stop thinking such dark thoughts, I told myself. As if trying to avoid a huge wave, I clung to a rock at the bottom of the sea and held my breath. The wave would surely pass by. You're just tired, I told myself, and overwrought. Grab on to what's real. It doesn't matter what—just grab something real. I reached into my pocket for the coins. They grew sweaty in my hand.

I tried hard to think of something else. My sunny apartment back in Unoki. The record collection I'd left behind. My nice little jazz collection. My specialty was white jazz pianists of the fifties and sixties. Lennie Tristano, Al Haig, Claude Williamson, Lou Levy, Russ Freeman . . . Most of the albums were out of print, and it had taken a lot of time and money to collect them. I had diligently made the rounds of record shops, making trades with other collectors, slowly building up my archives. Most of the performances weren't what you'd call "first-rate." But I loved the unique, intimate atmosphere those musty old records conveyed. The world would be a pretty dull place if it were made up of only the first-rate, right? Every detail of those record jackets came back to me—the weight and heft of the albums in my hands.

But now they were all gone forever. And I'd obliterated them myself. Never again in this lifetime would I hear those records.

I remembered the smell of tobacco when I kissed Izumi. The feel of her lips and tongue. I closed my eyes. I wanted her beside me. I wanted her to hold my hand, as she had when we flew over Egypt, and never let go.

The wave finally passed over me and away, and with it the music.

Had they stopped playing? Certainly that was a possibility. After all, it was nearly one o'clock. Or maybe there had never been any music to begin with. That, too, was entirely possible. I no longer trusted my hearing. I closed my eyes again and sank down into my consciousness—dropped a thin, weighted line down into that darkness. But I couldn't hear a thing. Not even an echo.

I looked at my watch. And realized I wasn't wearing one. Sighing, I stuck both hands in my pockets. I didn't really care about the time. I looked up at the sky. The moon was a cold rock, its skin eaten away by the violence of the years. The shadows on its surface were like a cancer extending its awful feelers. The moonlight plays tricks with people's minds. And makes cats disappear. It had made Izumi disappear. Maybe it had all been carefully choreographed, beginning with that one night long ago.

I stretched, bent my arms, my fingers. Should I continue, or go back the way I came? Where had Izumi gone? Without her, how was I supposed to go on living, all by myself on this backwater island? She was the only thing that held together the fragile, provisional me.

I continued to climb uphill. I'd come this far and might as well reach the top. Had there really been music there? I had to see for myself, even if only the faintest of clues remained. In five minutes, I had reached the summit. To the south, the hill sloped down to the sea, the harbor, and the sleeping town. A scattering of street lights lit the coast road. The other side of the mountain was wrapped in darkness. There was no indication whatsoever that a lively festival had taken place here only a short while before.

I returned to the cottage and downed a glass of brandy. I tried to go to sleep, but I couldn't. Until the eastern sky grew light, I was held in the grip of the moon. Then, suddenly, I pictured those cats, starving to death in a locked apartment. I—the real me—was dead, and they were alive, eating my flesh, biting into my heart, sucking my blood, devouring my penis. Far away, I could hear them lapping up my brains. Like Macbeth's witches, the three lithe cats surrounded my broken head, slurping up that thick soup inside. The tips of their rough tongues licked the soft folds of my mind. And with each lick my consciousness flickered like a flame and faded away. ◆

(*Translated, from the Japanese, by Philip Gabriel.*)

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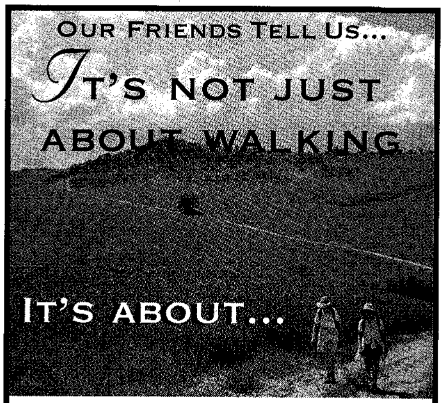

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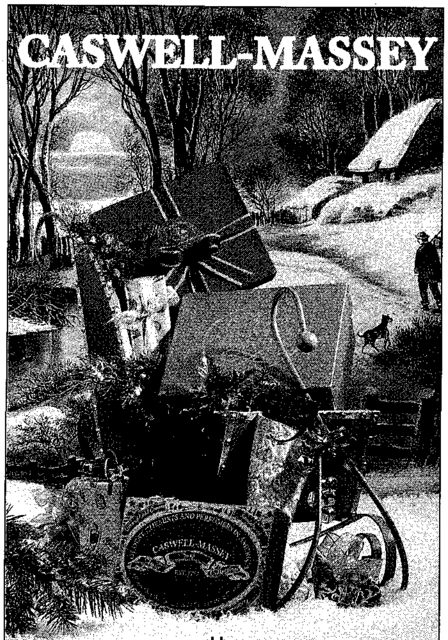

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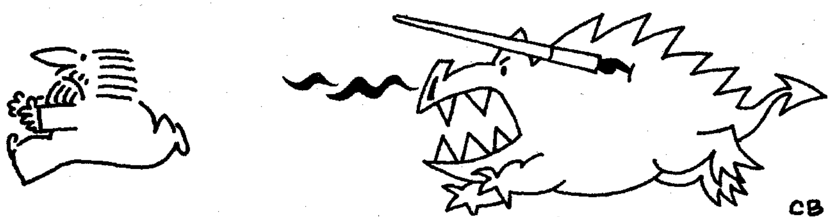


BOOKS

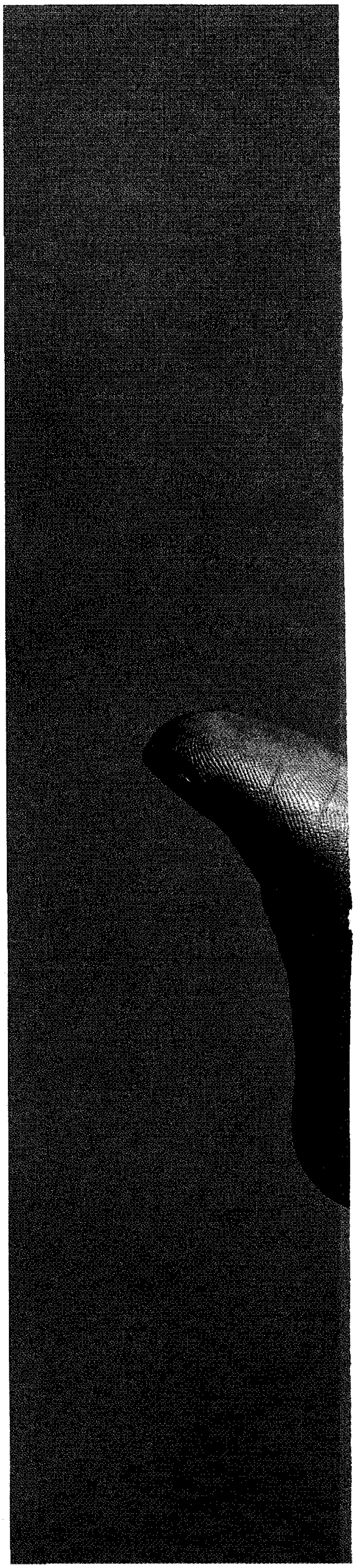
BLUE HEAVEN

The making of Miles Davis's masterpiece.

BY FRANCIS DAVIS

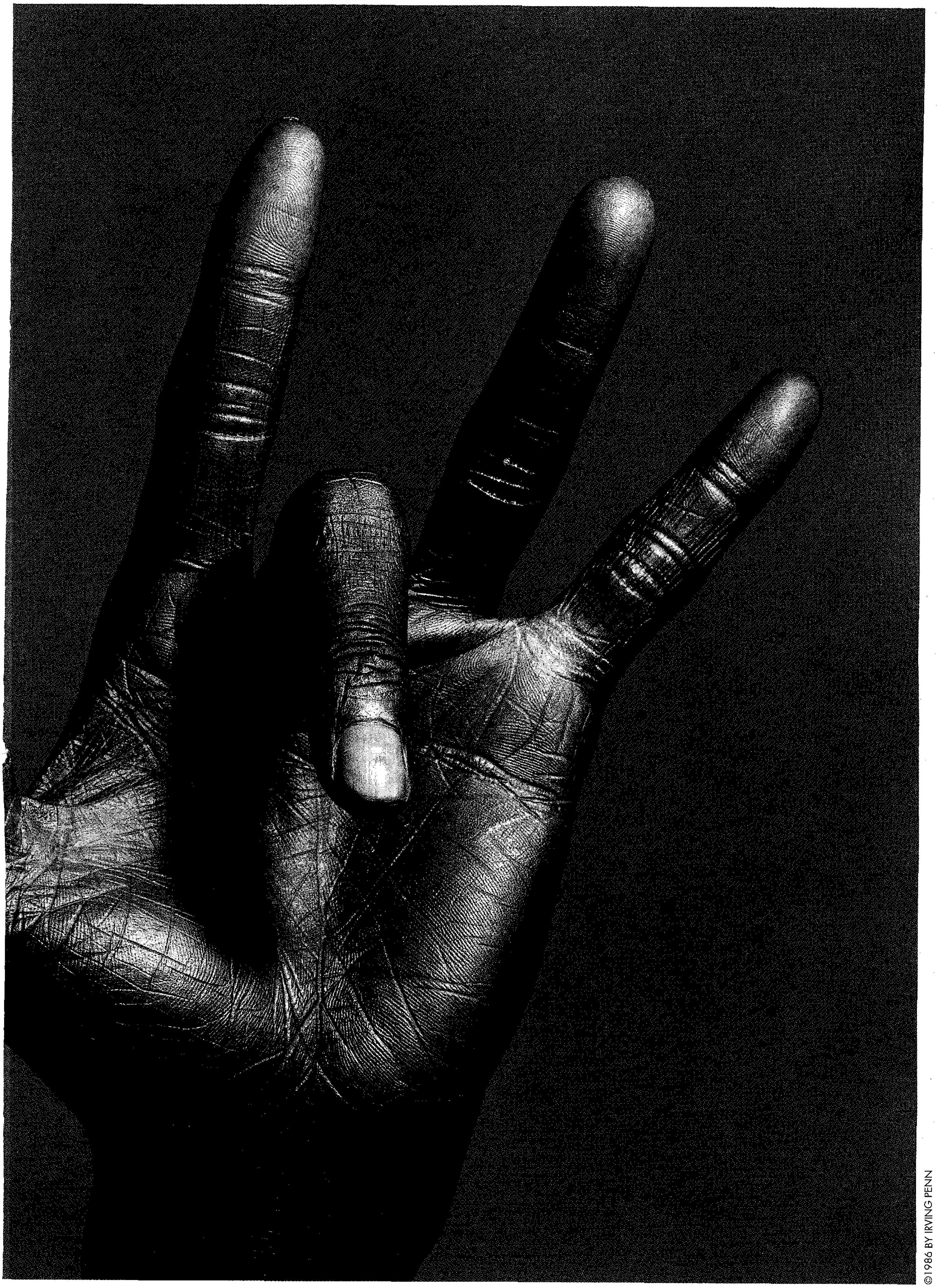
Browsing in a record store about a dozen years ago, I heard a piece of music I recognized but couldn't immediately place. Over a two-note figure, repeated again and again by bass and piano, a tenor saxophonist with a prayerful tone like John Coltrane's worried the notes of a scale as though they were beads on a rosary. There was a noticeable echo in the sound of his horn, and though it was clearly intended to lend his playing greater presence, it had the opposite effect, of drawing the ear to the surrounding, contemplative hush. My first guess was that this had to be something on ECM, a label that once advertised its releases as presenting "the most beautiful sound next to silence." Then I almost smacked myself when it dawned on me that the saxophonist sounded so much like Coltrane because it was Coltrane. The piece was "Flamenco Sketches," from what may be the best-selling jazz album of all time, Miles Davis's "Kind of Blue"—a recording that I had prided myself on knowing note for note.

What fooled me was that echo, which is present on no other edition of the album. Its appearance on this, the first digitally remastered CD of "Kind of Blue," was, I suppose, an attempt to put a contemporary gloss on a classic from another era. But the truth is that no two editions of "Kind of Blue" have sounded exactly the same. The poet Michael S. Harper once told a story about a man from Iowa who became so transfixed by the three numbers on Side One of the original, 1959 LP—"So What," "Freddie Freeloader," and "Blue in Green"—that he never got around to flipping the record over. Hearing Side One was so powerful, he recalled, that he was afraid Side Two would be a letdown. I wonder if this fellow ever noticed anything awry about those three tracks as he listened to them again and again. They were made at the first of two recording sessions, during which an undetected problem with the speed of one of the tape recorders resulted in a quarter-tone sharpness in pitch. For decades, this mistake bedevilled inexperienced musicians who tried to play along with the tracks, only to find themselves ending up in the wrong key. For the rest of us, the tonal ambiguity actually worked in the album's favor, creating the seductive illusion of music that inhabited its own, dreamlike space. No engineer seems to have spotted the error until 1992, when someone at Columbia Records bothered to listen to a safety copy that had been recorded at the correct speed. The most recent reissue of "Kind of Blue," which appeared in 1997, uses the correct pitch for the first three tracks and drops the echo effect on "Flamenco Sketches," but it features a new distortion—an occasional tape hiss that is possibly intended to assure listeners that



PHOTOGRAPH BY IRVING PENN

Miles Davis's hand. His strategy was to bring together radically disparate musicians and wait for the friction to produce heat and light.



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"You've changed, Howie."

• •

the producers have left well enough alone.

Inattention to sound wasn't the only problem with earlier generations of the album. On the disk labels and jacket sleeves of the initial release, "All Blues" was identified as "Flamenco Sketches" and vice-versa. On every edition before the most recent one, the alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley's last name was misspelled, and the pianist Wynton Kelly and the drummer Jimmy Cobb were listed as Wyn Kelly and James Cobb. When the album made its début on CD, the cover inappropriately showed Miles in his freaky-deaky duds of the seventies (in 1959, he was still wearing Brooks Brothers and fine Italian silk); it also gave the false impression that he played trumpet left-handed.

"Kind of Blue" has sold more than two million copies over the years—a remarkable figure for such uncompromising jazz. More than four decades after its first appearance, it routinely sells between four and six thousand copies a week in the United States alone. Although many of these buyers may be people who are otherwise disinclined to take a chance on jazz, there is no telling how many copies a week are sold to longtime jazz connoisseurs who are replacing older, worn-out editions.

In the history of jazz, "Kind of Blue" is important as the album that popularized modal improvisation—that is, it alerted musicians to the lyrical potential of riffing on Western music's original scales, in repudiation of bebop's use of augmented chords and quick-change harmonics. But this doesn't explain the intensely romantic identification that so many listeners feel with the album. In " 'Kind of Blue': The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece" (Da Capo; $23), Ashley Kahn says that "in the church of jazz, [the album] is one of the holy relics." And in another new book on the same subject, "The Making of 'Kind of Blue' " (St. Martin's; $22.95), Eric Nisenson writes that for him the album was "a gateway to the world of adult emotions."

The names of the musicians who were involved in "Kind of Blue" provide the most obvious clue to the album's appeal. Besides Davis, Coltrane, Adderley, Kelly, and Cobb, they included the pianist Bill Evans and the bassist Paul Chambers—a post-bop summit. All were current members of Davis's band, except Evans, who was a recent alumnus. (Kelly, his replacement, plays only on "Freddie Freeloader," the closest thing to an up-tempo number on the album.) Part of what fascinates us now is that the recording sessions took place in the nick of time: it's virtually impossible to imagine Davis, Evans, Adderley, and Coltrane getting together two or three years later. By then, each of them had become not only the leader of his own band but the founder of his own informal school of jazz.

Davis was an unorthodox bandleader, though he was hardly as laissez-faire as his reputation suggests. He was not above creating contrast and variety using, like other bandleaders of the period, such means as gradual or sudden shifts in rhythm and dynamics or texture. (It's taken me all these years to notice that the drums are silent during Davis's opening solo on "Flamenco Sketches," finally coming in under Coltrane.) But his typical strategy was to bring together sidemen who were radically different from one another, both in temperament and in musical inclination, and to wait for the friction to produce heat and light. He and Coltrane were the most obvious polarities: Davis's solos, spare and confidential, drawing you in by holding something back; Coltrane's densely packed flights, reaching for musical transcendence with their downpour of notes. Adderley and Evans sounded exactly the way they looked. Adderley was fleshy and jovial, a motivating force in the "soul jazz" movement of the fifties. Even his ballad solos danced the hucklebuck, tacitly inviting listeners to do likewise. Evans, the band's only white face, was shy; he wore glasses and sat hunched over the keyboard as though he were trying to make himself invisible. His friend the composer and modal guru George Russell tells Nisenson that Evans looked like a "nonperson."

Jimmy Cobb once said that "Kind of Blue" sounds as characteristic of Evans as of Davis. Certainly, Evans seems as much responsible for the album's distinctive melancholy. There is evidence to suggest that he co-wrote "Flamenco Sketches" and "Blue in Green," although Davis was given sole credit. Evans also wrote the album notes—eloquent cues for the generations of listeners who have cherished "Kind of Blue" as an unrivalled exercise in spontaneity. Evans compares what happened in the sessions to a form of Japanese medieval painting—*suibokuga*—in which "an unnatural or interrupted stroke will destroy the line or break through the parchment," and in which "erasures or changes" are therefore impossible. He writes, "Miles conceived these settings only hours before the recording dates . . . and I think without exception the first complete performance of each was a 'take.' " In fact, the session tapes, which have been circulating among collectors for years, tell a different story. There were two complete takes of "Flamenco Sketches" (the earlier one is now a CD bonus track), along with a lot more stopping and starting than Evans's notes would have us believe. And, contrary to what the pianist implies, it has never been uncommon for jazz musicians to be asked to sight-read new pieces at recording sessions. There have been many bandleaders for whom this was a deliberate strategy, including Duke Ellington.

What was different about "Kind of Blue" was that the musicians were required not only to interpret new compositions but also to improvise according to untried procedures. Evans identifies what was musically visionary about the album in the final paragraph of his notes when he describes one of the pieces as "modal." (Jazz musicians tend to use the word loosely, referring to any piece built on scales as "modal," but the term properly refers to music built on one or more of the archaic, pre-classical scales, or modes.) "Kind of Blue" is frequently hailed for having introduced modes to jazz, but this distinction seems to belong to George Russell's "Cubana Be, Cubana Bop," a two-part work recorded by the Gillespie band in 1947. In any case, modal scales were still a tricky business for most musicians in 1959. Among the session photographs in Kahn's book is one of Cannonball Adderley's well-fortified music stand. It shows Adderley's mouthpiece, a box of reeds, a pack of Newports, a sugar substitute, a diabetes medication, a bottle of Bufferin, and a lead sheet for "Flamenco Sketches" outlining its five modes. Adderley suffered from migraines, but he might have needed the Bufferin in any case. Like Coltrane, he was venturing into unfamiliar territory, and there are moments when both men sound as though they're treading cautiously. This wasn't entirely to either player's disadvantage: Coltrane benefitted from a little slowing down at that point in his career, and Adderley needed a safeguard against glibness. Indeed, one hears a good deal of tentativeness on the part of everyone but Davis and Evans. This is one of the album's most compelling aspects; it comes across as passionate deliberateness—an antidote to the unmediated virtuosity of so much modern jazz.

Evans, in his analogy of the music to *suibokuga*, captures the music's peculiar Zen. A good illustration is on "So What," which begins with a questioning, out-of-tempo, piano-and-bass prelude that later musicians tend to skip in favor of going straight to the main theme. (Both Kahn and Nisenson suggest that the introduction may have been written by the arranger Gil Evans, a frequent collaborator of Davis's.) "So What" eventually becomes a bouncy semi-blues, with the horns and bass doing a Baptist-style call-and-response that is not much different from dozens of other numbers of the period. But the memory of those austere opening bars lingers. "So What" could be the sound of one finger snapping.

Kahn's book is the more valuable of the two. (Instead of delving into the origins of "Kind of Blue," Nisenson is mostly content to sit back, dig the sounds, and deliver big thoughts about "the desire for authentic personal identity and expression" and "the search for freedom" implicit in jazz.) Kahn, a former music editor for VH1, has done a good deal of research, and his book is a small treasure. Among other things, we learn how many microphones and what brand of tape were used for the recordings, the distinct acoustics produced by the high ceilings at Columbia's Thirtieth Street Studio, and how much each musician was paid. These are the sorts of things that I find weirdly valuable to know as I listen to the album, though others might be inclined to dismiss them as fodder for obsessives.

Kahn examines the roles played in Davis's career by various Columbia executives, including George Avakian, who signed him to the label, and he follows "Kind of Blue" into the marketplace. An

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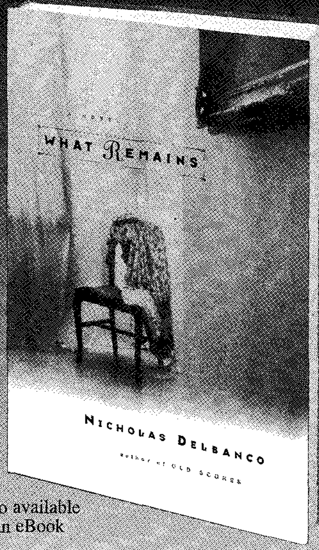

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incident that took place a week after the album's release gave it an unforeseen splash of publicity. Davis was playing at Birdland, and, between sets, he stepped outside to hail a cab for a woman friend who was white. A policeman asked the trumpeter to move along, and when Davis apparently refused, he was clubbed. The event made front-page news. Kahn's book also includes such intriguing memorabilia as a facsimile of the handwritten manuscript for Evans's album notes; it reveals, among other things, that the pianist's penmanship was as tidy and as sure as his playing.

Kahn solicits the opinions of numerous musicians who were not directly involved in the album, and it's comforting to find that they turn out to be fans like the rest of us. The pianist and composer Herbie Hancock, who was a sideman with Davis in the sixties, marvels at Davis's boldness in assigning the melody of "So What" to bass. The South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela and the arranger Quincy Jones are more subjective. "Miles juxtaposed the modern, fantastically, against something very primitive on 'Kind of Blue,' " Masekela says. "It had very deep Congolese overtones for me." Referring to the music's slow-moving cadences, Jones says, "You know what it is? It's a junkie tempo."

It is no fault of Kahn's that his book includes little comment on "Kind of Blue" by the musicians involved in making it. To them, the two recording sessions seem to have been merely two more days on the job. Davis, in his autobiography, published in 1989, said that with "Kind of Blue" he was trying to evoke the sound of a gospel choir he had once heard on a dark road in Arkansas and the sound of an African thumb piano he had heard during a performance by an African ballet troupe. I don't give the remark much credence: Davis may have been engaging in revisionism, in an attempt to make the album seem "blacker" than it really was. Although Nisenson suggests that "Kind of Blue" was Davis's effort to divert jazz away from conventional Western tonality, the modes he and Evans employed *were* Western; it was Coltrane who, a few years later, popularized the use of non-Western scales in jazz. Nisenson seems on safer ground when he describes "Kind of Blue" as "the jazz equivalent of the impressionism of Debussy, Ravel, and Scriabin," and he quotes Davis as having said, around the time of the sessions, that "classical composers—some of them—[had] been writing this way for years." People listen to "Kind of Blue" just, I think, as concert audiences have traditionally listened to a diaphanous Debussy work like "La Mer." They may sense that something formally unusual is being ventured, but their emotional response is triggered by the music's mood, not by its method.

Kahn's critical insights are also helpful, though he slightly exaggerates the album's radical effect on jazz developments. "So What" may be modal, but it is still structured according to the standard length of thirty-two bars, and it has a conventional pop song's eight-bar bridge. And, unlike bebop, or the style of free improvisation that Ornette Coleman introduced the same year "Kind of Blue" appeared, modal jazz never became a widespread movement—though once Davis showed the way, it was a style that nearly every jazz musician felt he had to try, if only to keep up. Always a chameleon, Davis quickly moved on.

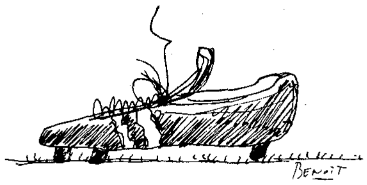
A question that neither book addresses is whether any new jazz album could have anything approaching "Kind of Blue" 's impact. Sadly, the answer is no. Nisenson tells us that in the fifties jazz was still "somewhat isolated, alienated from American society at large," but this observation seems even more accurate about the state of the form today. Kahn is more on target in implying that Davis's celebrity in the fifties owed a great deal to Columbia's practice of marketing and promoting jazz LPs through its pop division. Davis's records weren't pop by any means, but they often reached as large an audience. Moreover, the trumpeter had an uncanny knack for being at the center of cultural trends. (The novelist Dan Wakefield reminds Kahn that Davis's next landmark album, "Sketches of Spain," was released at a time when everybody he knew had a bullfighting poster on the wall.) With "Kind of Blue," Davis captured the questing uncertainty that prevailed in intellectual circles at the end of the fifties—a time when the fads included the writings of the Beats and J. D. Salinger and the blissful resignation of Zen Buddhism. If "Kind of Blue" continues to speak to us so forcefully, it is partly because it, too, remains such an ambiguous icon of its time. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Off Keck Road, *by Mona Simpson (Knopf; $19).* When Bea Maxwell returns to her small home town, in 1964, after college and a stint at a big-city ad agency, she wants to believe that this is not the end of her story—that the chapter including "the startling redemption" is still to come. But what follows is less a story than a catalogue of fragile moments that never crystallize into actual events. Bea wrestles with the propriety of a woman telephoning a man, flirts awkwardly with a priest, and deflects a sexual advance from her married boss, to her regret. It's not easy to write a novel in which the central tragedy is that nothing happens, but the author uses the cumulative power of small details to convince us that Bea's stalled life is a life worth knowing.

The Bridegroom, *by Ha Jin (Pantheon; $22).* In this dazzling collection of stories, set in provincial China in the fairly recent past, most of the protagonists are emerging from the numbing predictability of totalitarianism, realizing that they must abandon the passivity that has insured their survival in the past. Their game attempts at adaptation are usually doomed, often in surprising ways: in one story, an entrepreneur is embittered at finding himself suddenly glorified for the same activities that once led to his imprisonment; in another, a young academic does his best to demolish the reputation of his former teacher in an ostensible letter of recommendation.

A Life in the Twentieth Century: Innocent Beginnings, 1917-1950, *by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (Houghton Mifflin; $28.95).* With a fine historian's sense of the past, Schlesinger imbues every aspect of the first volume of his memoirs with vitality, telling readers, most of them, inevitably, younger than he, just what they need to know—the everyday details (such as what people wore and what things cost) or, in the case of the intellectual celebrities who appear, why their work matters. Schlesinger makes bygone struggles (between isolationists and interventionists before Pearl Harbor, between Stalinists and liberals on the American left after the war) pertinent to the present. And he shrewdly points out the parallels between an era's arguments over historical interpretation and its political issues, as in his discussion of recent disputes over when the Allies became aware of the Holocaust.



Stardust, *by John Gribbin with Mary Gribbin (Yale; $24.95).* It turns out that the old Joni Mitchell lyric "We are stardust" was not simply an example of poetic license during the Age of Aquarius. The nitrogen nuclei in our bodies today, the Gribbins point out, are the same ones that helped regulate certain reactions in early generations of stars. Readers of popular astronomy books are always being asked to imagine the unimaginable by means of metaphors, but here the authors downplay metaphor because the very thing that is so astonishing about the creation and distribution of matter across the universe is its literal truth. Certainly, their collateral tale—the explosive growth in our understanding of the universe—is no less fascinating.

(un)Fashion, *by Tibor and Maira Kalman (Abrams; $30).* The late graphic designer Tibor Kalman was a true postmodern omnivore, revelling in the collisions between globalization and regional tastes; these cleverly arranged, fantastically colorful photographs document the ways in which ordinary people present themselves from Montana to Fiji. The result is more anthropological than artistic, a sort of pop version of *National Geographic.* Everywhere, as with the Masai man whose extremely pierced ears accommodate a pair of pineapple cans, Western detritus appears and is assimilated, but it is the local idiosyncrasies—penis sheaths worn in Papua New Guinea, blazing pigment rubbed into the skin and hair of Indian sadhus, Hong Kong funerary pajamas—that are strange and beautiful and moving.

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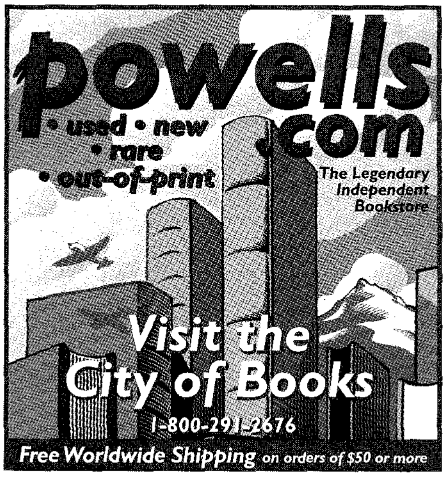
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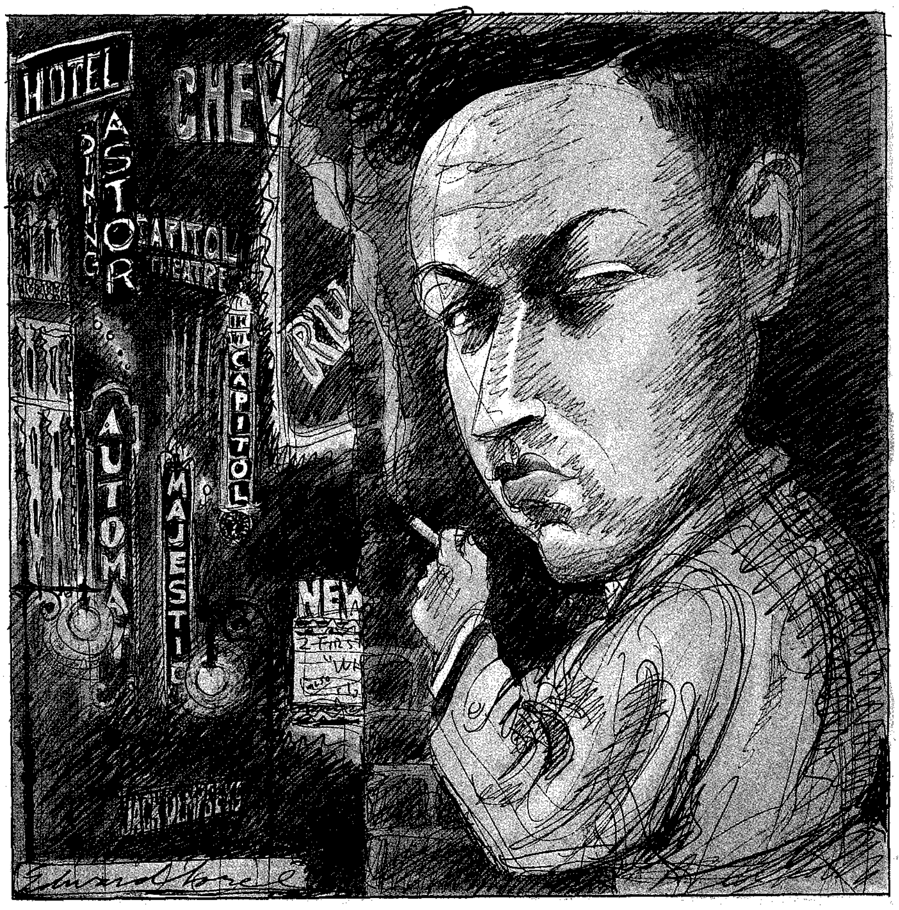
MESSAGES IN A BOTTLE

The early letters of Tennessee Williams.

BY JOHN LAHR

The letters of a genius are like loam: deep, dark, fertile sediment out of which something magnificent can grow. Tennessee Williams, a writer whose literary output included more than seventy plays, fifteen screenplays, five books of prose, and two books of poems, was a superb correspondent, and his letters provide a kind of hastily drawn geography of his roiling interior—which was, he said, like "sixteen cylinders in a jalopy." The first selection of his letters to be published, "Tennessee Williams's Letters to Donald Windham, 1940-1965," which came out in 1976 and is now out of print, was a series of gorgeously written confidences to a friend and onetime theatrical collaborator. This stellar cache conveys a sense of the wonder, immediacy, and grit that fuelled Williams before and after what he called "the catastrophe of success," but it was limited by the fact that its editor (Windham himself) had an axe to grind with Williams's achievement. The second major collection, "The Selected Letters of Tennessee Williams, Volume I: 1920-1945," edited by Albert J. Devlin and Nancy M. Tischler and published in November (New Directions; $37), throws a more expansive and objective light on Williams's haunted spirit: it is a rich literary haul, which makes up in breadth for what it lacks in depth. The guarded, pragmatic Williams can sometimes write a disingenuous sentence, but he cannot write a bad one. His letters are among the century's finest.



Williams's youth was restless and nomadic, but his eye was always on New York.

In the sprawling narrative of "The Selected Letters," which cover Williams's early years (he was born in 1911 and died in 1983), we meet first the members of his blighted family, some of whom he would later mythologize in "The Glass Menagerie" (1945): his mother, "Miss Edwina"; his then hated, bullying father, Cornelius, who called Williams "Miss Nancy" and whose ear had been bitten off in a poker fight; his younger brother, Dakin ("King Dakin"); his psychologically disintegrating sister, Rose; and his loving grandparents, the Reverend and Mrs. Walter Dakin, in whose Episcopal rectory in Mississippi Williams had spent his happy first six years, before his family retreated to a life of shabby gentility and other humiliations in St. Louis ("St. Pollution"). "Nowhere was ease / But watchfulness in all corners," Williams wrote of his childhood in the poem "Cortege." "You lost belief in everything but loss."

In the family letters, which form the first quarter of the collection, one can occasionally glimpse, between the diplomatic neutrality of Williams's lines, the emotional minefields of his repressed and repressive household. "I am very anxious to hear from you concerning the situation on the home front," he wrote to Rose, from college, in 1931. "Has the spirit of Quiet Night now descended?" But the editors' quotations from Williams's early, grief-struck "Literary Journal" cut through his persiflage and provide far more honest feeling and insight. In a 1936 letter to his beloved grandfather about Rose's increasingly frequent psychotic episodes, for instance, Williams is almost a Pollyanna: "She types, practices piano and does housework but still has odd delusions, such as thinking Mrs. Wright next door is her half sister and that the family is responsible for her ill health but does not talk about it except occasionally." He adds, "Her doctors seem to do wonders with her. . . . We hope she will gradually return to normal." In Williams's journal of around the same time, we hear the authentic voice—with its punishing mixture of pain and perception—that is never on display for his family: "Tragedy. I write that word knowing the full meaning of it. We have had no deaths in our family but slowly by degrees something was happening much uglier and more terrible than death. Now we are forced to see it, know it. The thought is an aching numbness—a horror!"

EDWARD SOREL

Still, once Williams mails off a batch of plays to a Group Theatre playwriting contest, in 1938, calling himself "Tennessee" for the first time (and subsequently winning a "special prize" and a much needed hundred dollars), and then sets off for New Orleans to make his professional way, the letters, like the man, come into vivacious focus; almost none of the subsequent four hundred pages are without some piquant revelation. To his literary guardian angel, the chic and petite agent Audrey Wood, who is the heroine of these struggling years, and to his expanding coterie of gay bohemian friends ("homolectuals")—to whom many of the remaining letters are addressed—Williams speaks with often luminous forthrightness. "I have lived behind the mobile fortress of a deep and tranquil pessimism for so long that I feel *almost* impregnable," he wrote to Wood in 1941.

These letters are like messages in a bottle, tossed out of what Williams called his "little cave of consciousness." They tell the story of an adventurous romantic spirit—composed in equal parts of fun, ferment, and fear—struggling to discipline both his talent and his broken heart. "Do you know I have formed the habit of burning holy candles for prayers and drinking Our Lady of Lourdes holy water?" he wrote to a friend and would-be writer, Paul Bigelow. "I will burn one for you. . . . And we will be purified and redeemed!—I work hard these days. For me there is either success or destruction sooner or not so sooner & so I *work*." A "veteran of discouragement," Williams lived by the gospel of endurance, which he preached and practiced until the end of his days. "This is a one-way street that I have chosen," he wrote to Wood. "I have to follow it through with all the confidence or courage that necessity gives you."

The letters are also a testament to Williams's bravery. "The fear of the world, the fight to face it and not run away, is the realest thing in all experience to *me*," he wrote to Wood, adding in a

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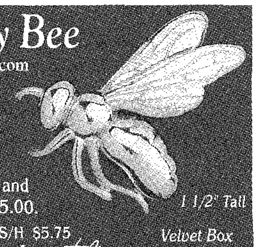

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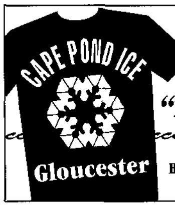

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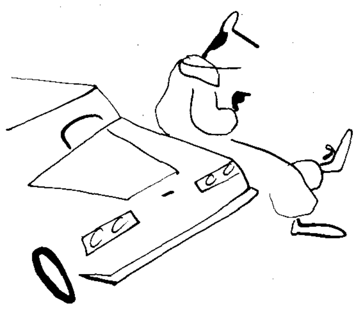
letter to another friend, "These successful Broadway people cannot conceive of anybody being afraid of anything but the Axis or a decline in the market." But despite what he calls his "blue devils" and his sense of his "own unfitness," his letters show him throwing himself into the slipstream of experience and trusting in his instincts to survive it and in his talent to turn his encounters into grist for his art. "I serve as waiter, cashier, publicity manager, host—in fact every possible capacity, including, sometimes, dishwasher," Williams wrote to his mother about working at the Quarter Eat Shop ("Meals for a Quarter in the Quarter") in New Orleans, which closed after only a week despite his advertising slogan. "When not busy in the dining-room, I stand on the sidewalk and try to drag people upstairs! It is really a great deal of fun."

"Don't turn your back on people," he once advised a disenchanted friend, and—in this early phase of his life, anyway—he didn't. His letters are full of the eccentric, unruly, wounded souls whose lives Williams would later weave into his stories: "I seem to have a propensity for getting into fantastic milieux nowadays—when I write about them people will say it's ridiculous, such people and things don't occur!" Undaunted by his penury, rattling the begging bowl at his family and at the Liebling-Wood Agency, Williams gobbled up the exotic life around him: first in New Orleans, then with a friend on a picaresque road trip to Los Angeles County, where he worked on a squab ranch, before hitchhiking to San Francisco, and then going down to Taos, to visit Frieda Lawrence, the wife of his literary hero, D. H. Lawrence.

Perhaps inevitably for a cosseted young man who fancied himself a pathfinder—"The Williamses had fought the Indians for Tennessee and I had already discovered that the life of a young writer was going to be something similar to the defense of a stockade against a band of savages"—Williams created something of a myth of his travels, which were not as extensive in those days as he made out. To be sure, his life was "restless" and "nomadic," but his eye was always on New York. In the letters, we watch as Wood introduces Williams to Broadway theatre and to big-city ways, and we follow him as he tries to hustle productions and grants before hightailing it out of town to preserve his sanity and his soul. "My whole life has been a series of escapes, physical or psychological, more miraculous than any of Houdini's," he wrote to Molly Day Thacher, who had been instrumental in getting him the Group Theatre award. Bird would soon become his nickname, and flight—"a disease and a progressive one, too"—an increasingly dominant theme in his plays and in his life. As the Second World War intensifies, in 1940, we find him on the beaches of Mexico, brilliantly describing a cabana scene, which he would re-create twenty years later in "Night of the Iguana":

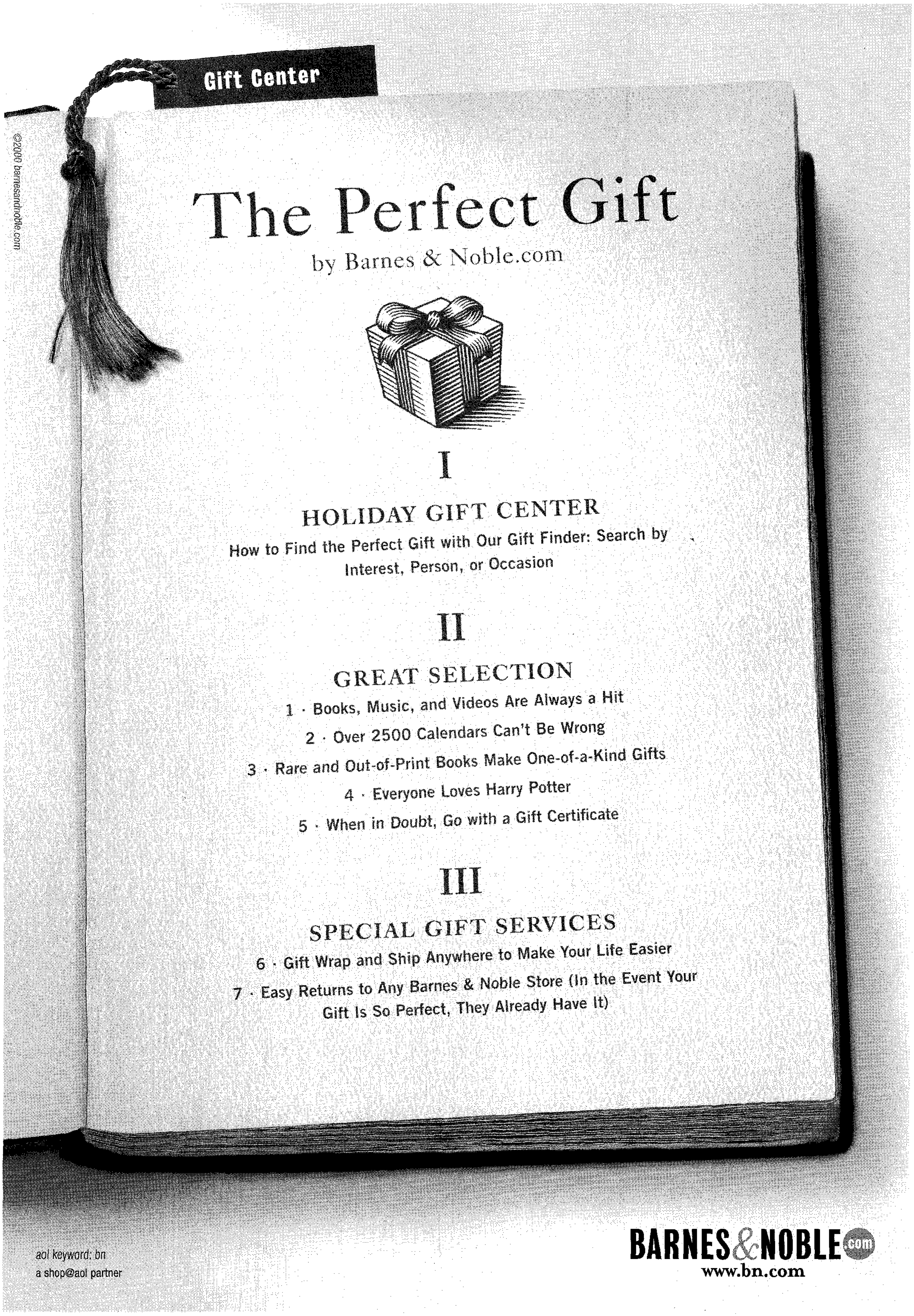
> The people here are of two classes, those who are waiting for something to happen or those who believe that everything has happened already. That is, the Americans and other outsiders. Their life is lying about the beaches usually in a hypnosis induced by strong drink and hot sunlight and lack of any exertion. . . . Nothing surprises or interests them particularly, not even a world that is cracking up all around them. They grin and squint in the sunlight and squeeze a drop or two of lemon into their rum-cocos. And the dark, slow natives drift around them like figures in a dream. . . . So the life here is just as weird and grotesque in its way as the life in the industrial centers up north.—I am sure, now, that I will never find one particular place where I feel altogether at home, will just have to keep moving about and absorbing as I go.

"Selected Letters" chronicles Williams's discovery of the mysteries of the American continent and of that other uncharted continent—his own body. He was a late bloomer in this department. His first recorded homosexual experience took place in June, 1939, when he was already twenty-eight. According to his journal, the encounter filled him with "spiritual nausea," but he soon found his appetite. "There are only two times in this world when I am happy and selfless and pure," he wrote to Windham, in a letter not included in this volume. "One is when I jack off on paper and the other when I empty all the fretfulness of desire on a young male body." By 1941, the pitch and roll of the Southern rhythms in Williams's syntax had taken on a new, high-camp note. "Well, my dear," he joked to Paul Bigelow about his summer frolics in Provincetown, "when I now appear in public the children are called in doors and the dogs pushed out!" He continued, "My cumulated sexual potency is sufficient to blast the Atlantic fleet out of Brooklyn!—Perhaps I shall when I get back to N.Y." Williams's portrayal of his sexual life is frequently hilarious. In Florida, during a stint as a night typist for the War Department, he stayed at the Jacksonville Y.M.C.A., a sexual hothouse overseen by two sanctimonious front-desk managers. "I always pass through the lobby whistling a church hymn," he wrote, "but piety lasts only to the turn of the stairs."



Throughout this tumult of experience (which he characterized as "Dark life. Confused. Tormented, incomprehensible and fabulously rich and beautiful"), Williams is always watching, noting, going to his typewriter to turn every scrap of experience—even, or perhaps especially, loss—into new life. At his first taste of queer-bashing, for instance, Williams notes, "Not that I like being struck, I hated it, but the keenness of the emotional situation, the material for art." As he admitted to Wood in 1943, "I drift through the world and nothing that happens to me makes much difference except the odd little world that I make on paper!" In this way, the fragile Williams reversed the psychic pattern of his equally fragile sister. Rose's lobotomy turned outer violence into inner oblivion; Williams's writing turned outer oblivion into inner violence. Williams, who circled around the themes of his plays with poems and stories, put in six hours a day at his typewriter all his adult life. "You know I never expect magazines to buy my stories, that isn't what I write them for at all, so I am not particularly concerned if they don't," he wrote to Wood. "Any work that has any honesty and a sufficient degree of craftsmanship or power eventually finds an outlet, I do have faith in that."

His life was one long creation and



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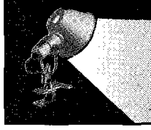

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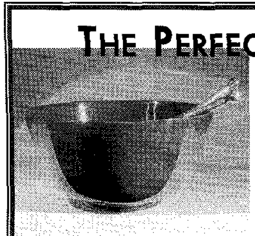

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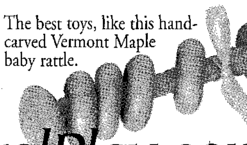

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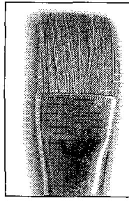

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one long revision. In these letters, we watch the gestation and fiasco of the 1940 Boston opening (and closing) of his first professional production, "Battle of Angels," which was later rewritten as "Orpheus Descending" (1957); the directorial infighting around "You Touched Me!," Williams's one-sided 1943-45 collaboration with Donald Windham; his brief stint at M-G-M, in 1943, writing what he called a "celluloid brassiere" for Lana Turner ("I feel like an obstetrician required to successfully deliver a mastodon from a beaver," he wrote to his agent, who negotiated a king's ransom of two hundred and fifty dollars a week for his services); and, most especially, the completion, in 1944, of "The Gentleman Caller," which Williams dismissed as a "nauseous thing"—"an act of *compulsion*, not love," he wrote to a friend. "Just some weird necessity to get my sister on paper. Thank God it is done, however inauspiciously." The play, retitled "The Glass Menagerie," was the black sheep that turned into a cash cow.

Although six hectic years passed between Williams's embarkation and his arrival on Broadway, it was only two years before he had his first major production. His successes may have been small and his audiences far from friendly ("So many people don't like my work!" he wrote in 1943. "It's a wonder to me that I am even the 'Best Known of the Unknown Playwrights' "), but from the beginning he was winning awards and acquiring influential support for his talent: from the Group Theatre and Audrey Wood to the publisher of New Directions, James Laughlin, who, beginning in the early forties, put Williams into the mainstream of avant-garde writing.

Nevertheless, in those embattled years, frustrated by the intractability of commercial American theatre, Williams felt under siege. "I want money, yes—but mostly I want an *audience*," he wrote in 1942. "If I get *that*, I am satisfied, for then I can throw in their faces the things they won't take till they know me, all the little, helpless, unspoken-for crowd of sheep-like creatures I seem to find in the world and wish Quixotically to be the equally little and helpless voice of." The fervency of war-effort America and the "exhausted theatre of realistic conventions" that evoked it made Williams's "personal lyricism" hard, if not impossible, for the public to fathom; Williams knew it. "The things that I have to sell in my work what little I can give to the world in the way of poetic truth—[are] going rapidly down on the wartime market, and lies and manic laughter and nationalistic hoopla are soaring dizzily up!" he wrote to a friend, in 1940. He also sensed a theatrical sea change. "This is the twilight of an era in the theatre. God knows what's coming next," he wrote in 1943. To the playwright Horton Foote, he counselled, "Keep your ear to the ground and concentrate on honesty till you know what else is coming! All these people are going, going—GONE!" He added, "Maybe we are, too, but—*En Avant!*"

As it turned out, Williams's romantic pursuit of self was in perfect synch with the shift in the national mood. As America moved from wartime self-sacrifice to postwar self-involvement, it suddenly found itself the richest and most powerful republic on earth. The country's spiritual mutation—a kind of delirium of self-aggrandizement—was debated most compellingly in Williams's plays, where appetite and idealism are always at loggerheads. The "death-ray" of Hollywood abundance invoked precisely the "spiritual Zombies" and "underground devils" that Williams's ferocious writing had forced out into the open. "Bless all the tortured world," he wrote in his journal in 1939.

"Selected Letters" ends with Williams full of blessings: "The Glass Menagerie" a hit, royalties rolling in, the ebullient author reporting to his agent on his sudden fame. "I have met the following here," he wrote from Mexico City in 1945. "Leonard Bernstein, Dolores Del Rio, Rosa Covarrubias, Norman Foster (now directing Mexican films), Romney Brent's sister, Balanchine, Chavez, and many lesser notables of the International Set (!) all of whom have invited me places." In his voice there is still a big-hearted sweetness and a sense of wonder at the miracle of his own survival. Over the ensuing decades, Williams's battle would be to keep his goodness alive in both triumph and defeat. ◆

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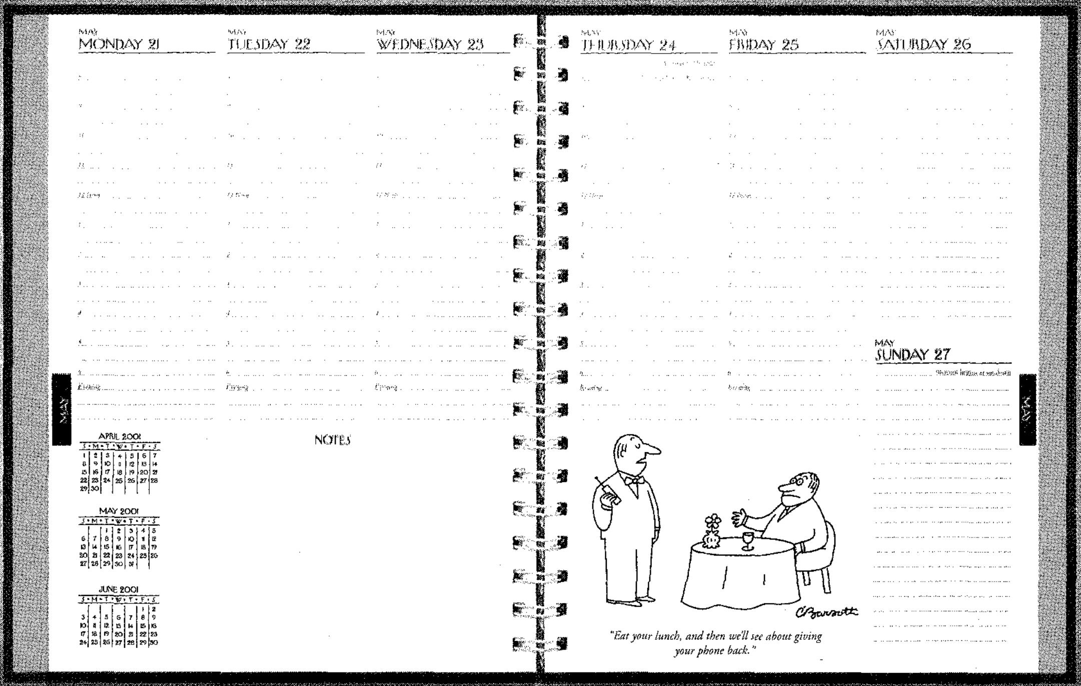
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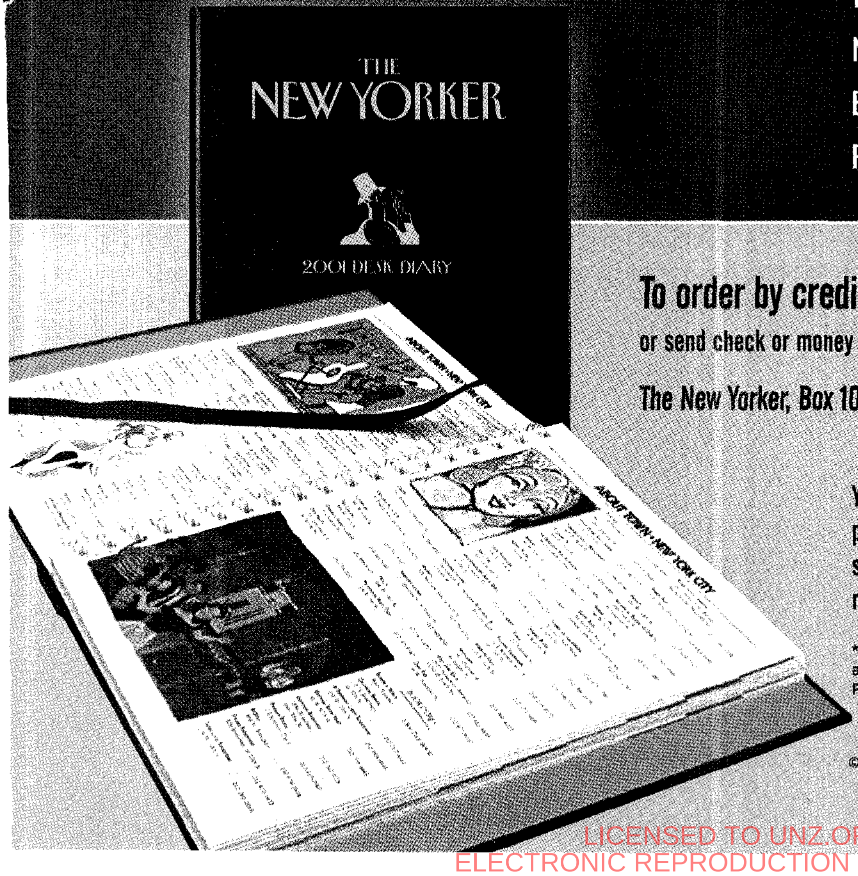
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THE THEATRE

GIVING UP THE GHOST

Sam Shepard's new play faces the griefs and guilts of family betrayal.

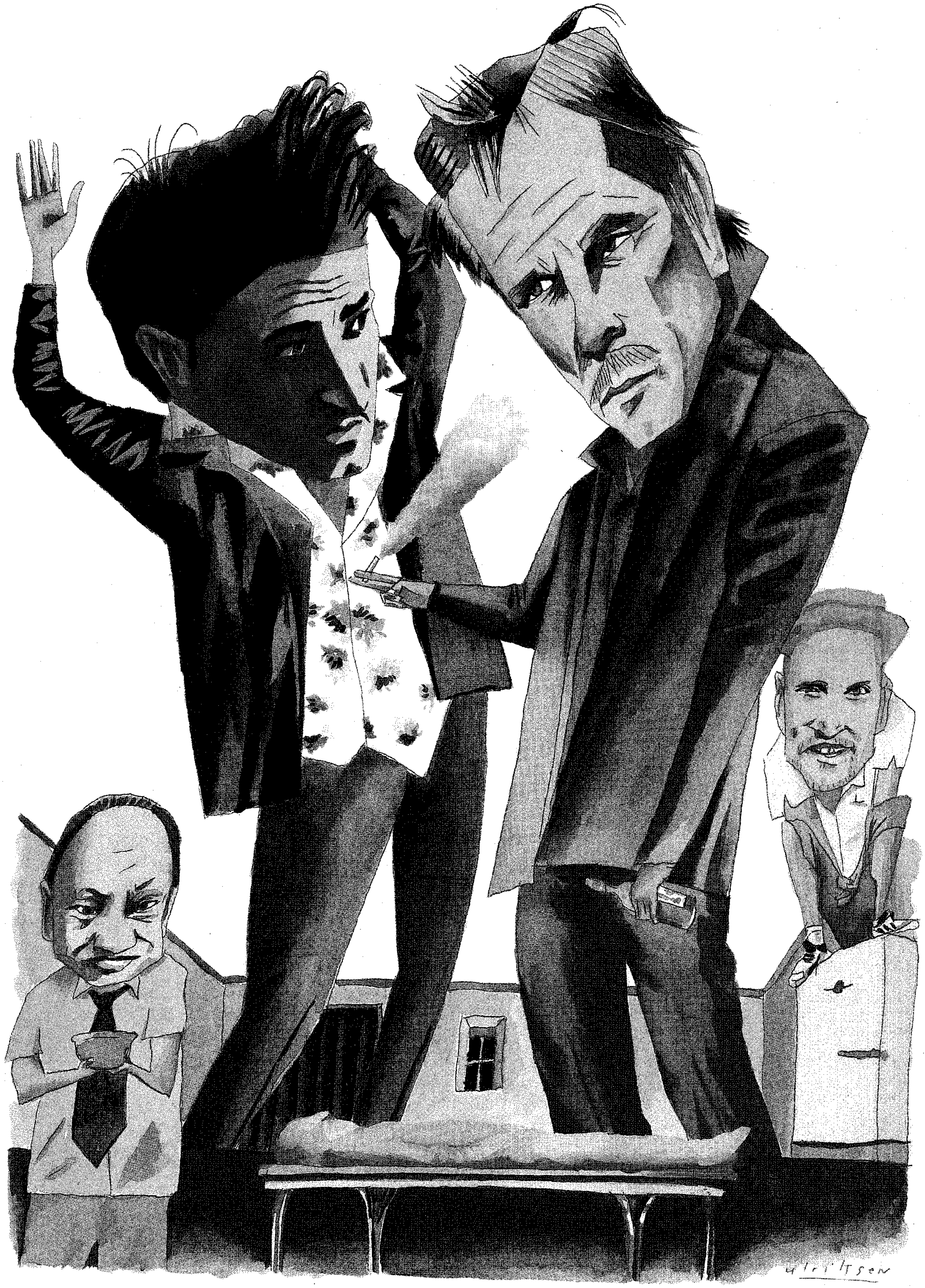
BY JOHN LAHR

In his thirty-seventh year of playwriting, Sam Shepard has returned to the Magic Theatre, in San Francisco, to direct his latest excursion into the geography of his own interior, "The Late Henry Moss." Shepard has brought with him his familiar themes of filial feuds, family dysfunction, and the spiritual deadliness of the Southwestern hinterland. And for this outing, one of his first since the creative glitch of "Simpatico," in 1994, Shepard has also brought insurance: a troupe of actors one could call the Sam Shepard All-Stars—Nick Nolte, Sean Penn, Woody Harrelson, James Gammon, and Cheech Marin. The amperage of their combined star power, and the novelty of a new Shepard tale, has quickly turned a tryout into a sellout, with tickets being hawked on eBay at two hundred and fifty dollars apiece.

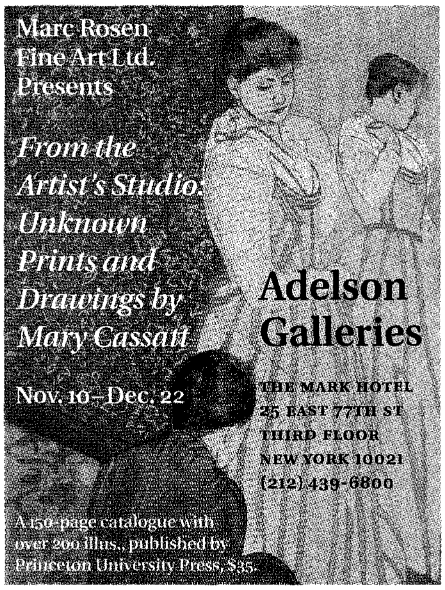
Whatever the audience paid to get in, it was more than the producers seem to have shelled out for the set: a run-down adobe dwelling, with a bathtub on a platform and little else. Here two estranged brothers, Ray and Earl (Penn and Nolte), confront each other after the death of their violent loner father (Gammon) and try to come to terms with the story of the bender he called his life. The subject matter is particularly resonant for Shepard, whose own father, like the fictional Henry Moss, was a sodden and abusive former military man. (He once ripped the front door off the house because his wife had locked him out.) Shepard's father made his first fictional appearance in a 1969 one-act exercise in Oedipal mayhem, "The Holy Ghostly"; he was Stanley Moss then. In that play, he is gunned down by his son, a cool renegade customer called Ice, who, like Shepard, has shed his family name. (Shepard was born Samuel Rogers.) But, even before the murder, apparitions bring Stanley the terrifying news that he is dead already. "You're a ghost, Mr. Moss," a witch tells him. She continues, "Do you know what a ghost is? A ghost is hung up between being dead and being alive because he doesn't know where he's at." Some thirty years on, in "The Late Henry Moss," this spiritual atrophy is not just described but dramatized. Cut off from family, friends, community, and useful work, Henry Moss feels dead but cannot die. A ghost is emptiness made aggressive, and Moss's unmoored powerlessness is both sensational and distressing, especially to him. "There's a whole shitload of 'walkers' and 'talkers' fabricating and perambulating their butts off!" he complains. "You think they're all in the land of the living? Is that what you think? Huh?" Moss's confusion also provides some of the play's best moments of comedy. "I'm too old to prove that I'm alive," he says at one point. He maneuvers a hapless taxi-driver—Harrelson, in a field day of patented crowd-pleasing dopiness—to check him for signs of life. "So—Just from your casual observation, you think there might be a little spark inside there, huh? A little ember of hope?" he asks. Harrelson props up Moss's hooded eyes and peers deep into them. "You're not dead, all right! As far as I can tell you are not dead!" he answers. "That's the first positive note I've heard in years," Moss says, deciding then and there to take his girlfriend (played by Sheila Tousey) and the taxi-driver on a fishing trip.

"Henry Moss" switches neatly between the brothers' encounters with the few people who knew their father and those people's memories, which are staged as flashbacks. In this way, the brothers piece together both Moss's last drunken days on earth and the events that led to their own estrangement. It's a sometimes shaky and haphazard theatrical structure, but it nevertheless manages to support the spectacle of heartbreak and shame. The brothers share nothing but a botched past—represented by their father's corpse, which at first lies in an ugly tan stucco alcove behind them. And, as in "True West" and "Buried Child," Shepard uses them to act out his own divided nature. Ray—Penn, in Ha-

MARK ULRIKSEN



In "The Late Henry Moss," Sean Penn and Nick Nolte play brothers who share nothing but a botched past.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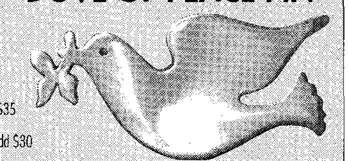

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waiian shirt and blue leather-tipped shoes that mark him as an urban cowboy—wants to remember, "to get to the bottom of things." "I get mean as a snake when I don't see the whole picture," he says. Ray is tyrannical, arrogant, unrelenting, manipulative, and a touch paranoid. He toys sadistically with the hapless cabdriver, who is persuaded to recount the story of Moss's last days. "You're nothing," Ray tells him. "An empty nothing. Just like me. A couple of nothings whose lives have never amounted to anything and never will. Do you think you can go along with this?" "Well, I don't know," the bewildered taxi-driver mumbles. "It's not exactly the way I was raised." This kind of browbeating abuse *is* exactly how the brothers were raised. Earl, who is nursing a bottle of bourbon as the play begins, is the gruff, hulking echo of his boozy father, a combination of force and frailty. As Nolte plays him, he is also all wrinkles and resignation, weighed down by a guilt and a grief that he can't articulate. A memorable burned-out case, Nolte slouches around the stage like some huge feral animal.

In this stunted, emotionally impoverished family, being fed is inevitably a big dramatic deal. The next-door neighbor Esteban (Cheech Marin, in an understated and heartwarming performance), whom we meet in both real and recalled time, is the play's gentle nurturer, forever bringing Henry bowls of soup or making *menudo* to cure Earl's hangover. Esteban is asked how he could continue to serve an ingrate like Henry, and in an inspired riff he compares his act of generosity to feeding livestock: "They live, that is all. They are just there. But they need you. . . . They wait for you by the fence. . . . Every day they are there at the same time—waiting." Thinking about food, Ray is reminded of his mother's table—"Everything perfect and just waiting like some kind of picture"—and of the day his father brutally beat his mother at dinner. Instead of protecting his mother, Earl, the elder brother, fled the scene, a desertion for which Ray now makes him pay by scrubbing the floor of their dead father's house. This sparks another epiphany of parental betrayal. "I just suddenly saw that it wasn't for us at all. It was for him," Ray says, of the work their mother put into preparing meals. "Everything. All those hours and hours of slaving away. . . . It was for *him*."

Despite Nolte and Penn's charisma, the brothers, as written, are all attitude and no texture. The dramatic stakes between them are not sufficiently high to galvanize their story or to turn their psychology into enthralling behavior. As a result, the play gets off to a slow start. The combination of a miked stage, a wide proscenium that diffuses the claustrophobic situation, and Shepard's own clunky staging takes a lot of wind out of the actors' emotional sails. Still, in the second act, when the taxi-driver arrives and begins the narrative of Moss's manic last hours, the play hits a satisfying stride. As we reach the end of Henry's life, we are confronted with James Gammon's brilliant drill-sergeant's caterwauling, a desperate noise, manufactured out of envy and disappointment, that lashes out at the world both to spoil it and to keep it at arm's length. The voice alone is almost a character. At the finale, Henry describes the day he mauled his wife ("I thought I'd killed her—but it was me I killed") and then ran from the house: "Cut off. Everything—far away. Birds. Trees. Sky. Removed! Everything—out beyond reach." His perpetual keening is the sound of this retreat, a wall of noise that lets nothing in and protects him from his unmanning shame.

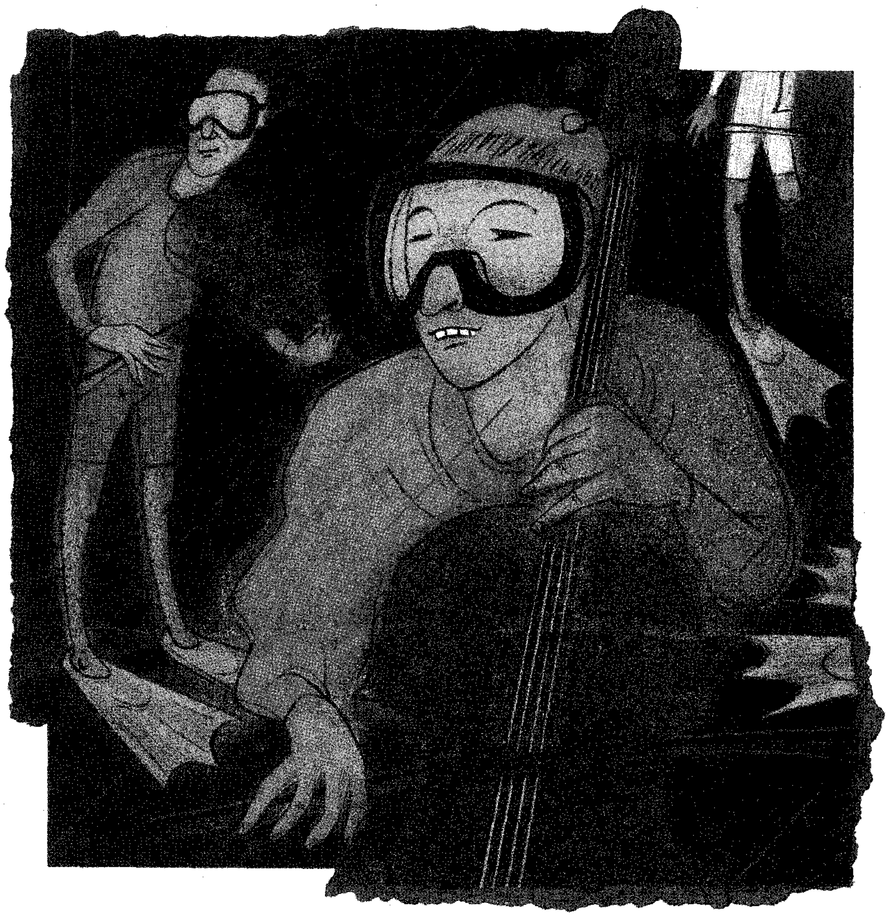
The last lines of the play invert the brothers' first words to each other. The exchange, for those who can hear it—projection is not the strong suit of film actors—works as a kind of redemption. Ray, who couldn't forgive or forget, now claims that he was "never one to live in the past." And the oblivious Earl finally remembers something. This neat transposition signals a new balance. What Shepard seems to be saying is that the inconsolable don't lose their emptiness, but, if they're lucky, they revisit their losses with less regret. At its best, Shepard's work is a kind of verbal and visual jazz, which surprises you with its penetrating leaps of association and its startling voices. If those voices don't come through to Shepard now quite as loud and clear and prescient as they once did, "The Late Henry Moss" is proof that they do still arrive; proof, also, that Shepard can channel them into moments of arresting eloquence. "The Late Henry Moss" will no doubt make it to New York. I hope the play stops along the way for repairs; it has its narrative problems, which must by now be obvious to its subtle creator, but there is nothing that a new first act, a new set, and a new director couldn't fix. ♦

MUSICAL EVENTS

CROSSING THE DIVIDE

Selling modern music as pop culture.

BY ALEX ROSS



The Gogmagogs' antic theatre breaks the barrier between high art and low fun.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

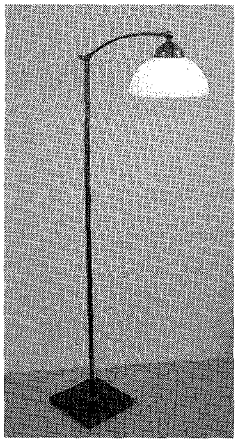
Those who believe in the historical necessity of stuffy behavior in the concert hall will be alarmed by recent developments at Miller Theatre, the main auditorium of Columbia University. A run of performances earlier this month by a British group called the Gogmagogs broke several unspoken rules of etiquette: one is that the performers should not remove their clothes or put on bunny outfits, and another is that the audience must not shout or giggle. Nominally, the Gogmagogs are a string septet, but they are really a contemporary-music theatre troupe, mixing modernism and Monty Python. The show was made up of several running gags, skits, and concepts, one of which was called "How to Deal with Being Dumped: A Step-by-Step Beginner's Requiem in Eight Easy Movements." Various movements of the Requiem Mass—Dies Irae, Libera Me, and so forth—served to evoke various stages of grief suffered by a jilted lover. Two members of the ensemble acted out the roles of the lover and his ex, while the others, putting down their instruments, sang a mildly dissonant, Stravinsky-like setting of Requiem texts by the jazz composer Django Bates.

What, exactly, were we watching? At first, it played like straight-out musical satire, falling into the same category as Peter Schickele's annual desecrations of Bach and the beloved falsetto stylings of La Gran Scena Opera Company. But parody wasn't quite the point. As the lover's agonies grew more acute—his language would have shocked both Lynne Cheney and Tipper Gore—the piece began to resemble a downtown theatre project, one that happened to use classical music rather than pop culture as its reference point. Not content to mock, the Gogmagogs suggested how much everyday rage and sorrow can surge through something as formally aloof as a Requiem. Throughout, these seven young Brits broke down barriers between composer and performer, performer and listener. At the same time, they showed themselves to be expert, hyper-athletic musicians. Even when dressed in snorkeling gear—don't ask—they stayed on pitch and in tempo.

Since 1997, the artistic director of Miller Theatre has been a youngish impresario named George Steel. His programming ideas have caused a lot of talk in the music world, and the bigwigs at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall are watching him closely. His talent for musical brainstorming goes back to his high-school days, in Washington, D.C.; his idol was Leonard Bernstein, and when the maestro came to town to conduct Stravinsky, Steel persuaded him to climb up the bell tower of the National Cathedral and bang out the big theme from "The Firebird" on the carillon.

Steel's programs are in the Bernstein mold. They strain against the intellectual insularity of the music world and reach for a broader, younger audience. But Bernstein never had much sympathy for the avant-garde; on "Bernstein Live," a compulsively fascinating new boxed set from the New York Philharmonic, the conductor can be heard waxing sardonic about a piece by John Cage in the composer's presence. Steel, by contrast, likes minimalism, electronic music, something he calls "opulent music," and much else besides. Before his arrival at Columbia, the Miller already had a tradition of contemporary concerts, but they were usually the kind that attracted a composer's teaching assistants and next of kin. Now new listeners are venturing inside. At a concert by the Absolute Ensemble—a lively band under the direction of Kristjan Järvi—my view was blocked by some guy's multicolored knit cap.

Steel seems to have picked up on a trend in taste that others have overlooked. Popular music, these days, is awash in new technologies but short on new ideas. People who grew up with punk and indie



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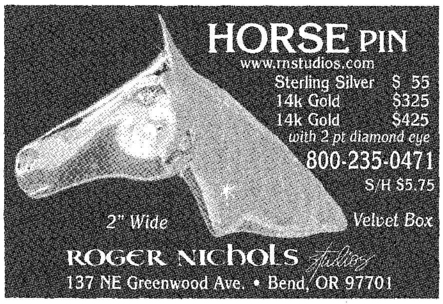

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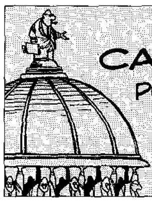

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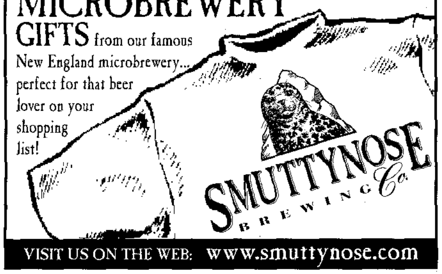

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rock, in particular, haven't found much to like in the latest products of the pop-music monolith, which range from the bubblegum pop of the Backstreet Boys to the bubblegum rebellion of Eminem. Rebels of a certain age have discovered that the electric guitar is not the only instrument that can make a subversive noise. Walk into a store like Kim's or Other Music, in the Village, and you will see sizable sections devoted to twentieth-century classical music. Morton Feldman snuggles next to Mouse on Mars. Another sign of the times is "Kid A," the monumentally eerie new album by Radiohead, one of whose tracks could pass for an organ work by Olivier Messiaen. That song was playing the other day at Virgin Records in Times Square, and if the d.j. had segued into Feldman's "Rothko Chapel" no one would have noticed.

The rituals of the concert experience can have an unnerving effect on first-time listeners who don't feel at home in spaces like Carnegie and Avery Fisher Hall. The new team at the Miller has done a few simple things to shift the atmosphere from nineteenth-century Vienna to twenty-first-century New York. For one, the houselights are lowered so that attention is focussed more on the stage. Performers play in front of a moody, solid-color screen. And the Absolute Ensemble, in its program of rock- and jazz-influenced works, sustained momentum by not pausing between pieces. Concerts of new music are often punctuated by excruciating longueurs as stagehands remove the three vibraphones used in one piece and bring on the four different-sized clarinets needed for the next. As Leila Josefowicz and the Absolute musicians prepared to play John Adams's Violin Concerto, Järvi and David Rozenblatt filled the gap with a fierce rendition of Steve Reich's "Clapping Music."

The real issue, though, is not how music should be presented but how it should be chosen. Contemporary music in New York was long dominated by militant camps—the "uptown" twelve-tone composers versus the "downtown" disciples of John Cage. The Miller's programming zigzags freely across this now meaningless divide. The season opened with two complete Reich concerts, the downtownest of them all. A week later, the Ensemble Sospeso, which has lately emerged as one of New York's best and brightest new-music groups, paid tribute to Louis Andriessen, the Dutch minimalist. The program drew a hip crowd by including a video short by the indie filmmaker Hal Hartley, entitled "The New Math(s)." Andriessen's score showed a turn from hard minimalist beats toward a kind of ambient lyricism. At the same time, the Miller acknowledged the sleek international style of Luciano Berio and the neurotic serialist designs of Jean Barraqué. The Gogmagogs, of course, landed joyously outside all these categories.

What's missing from the mix, so far, is more music by young composers. Some names on the Miller's programs this fall were all too familiar; it seemed as if Berio's seventy-fifth birthday had been going on for years. So it came as a relief when the Eighth Blackbird, another fiendishly good new-music ensemble, offered the première of a work by the Connecticut composer Daniel Kellogg, who is still in his twenties. His "Divinum Mysterium" is scored for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion—a variation on the "Pierrot Lunaire" ensemble. It draws on the entire twentieth-century musical menu, and not all of its choices are fully digested. The bass-clarinet arpeggio in the second movement, for example, comes almost note for note from "The Rite of Spring." But Kellogg has two qualities working in his favor: his music gives off a palpable intellectual energy, and it is superbly crafted and controlled.

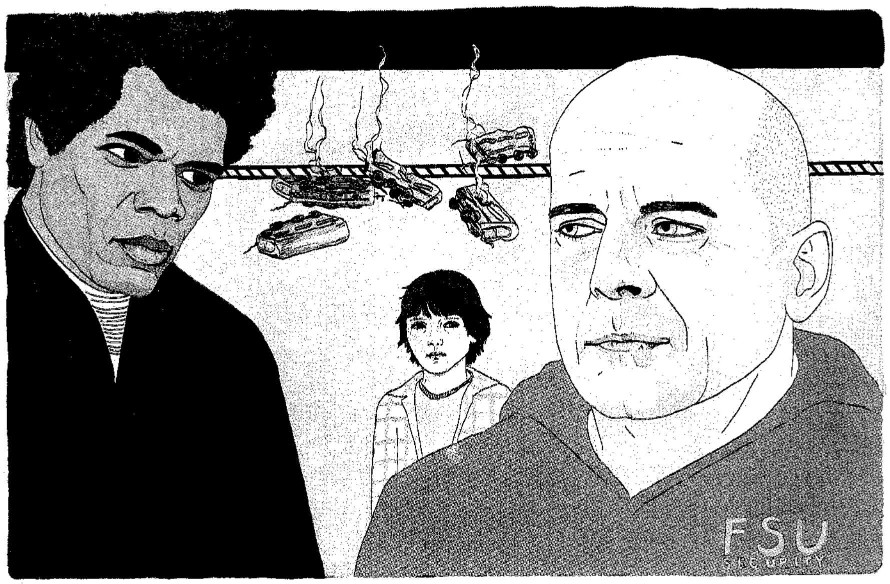
The Miller's fall season comes to a fittingly offbeat end on December 2nd, with a recital by the excellent Berkeley-based pianist Sarah Cahill. She pays tribute to Leo Ornstein, a mostly forgotten figure whose performances of modern music once caused a national stir. As a composer, Ornstein was probably the first to write "cluster" chords—extreme dissonances made up of adjacent notes. From 1914 to 1920, he toured as "Ornstein the Keyboard Terror," playing works with titles like "Suicide in an Airplane" to mobs of fans. In the twenties, he withdrew from the limelight and devoted himself to education, founding the Ornstein School of Music, in Philadelphia, whose most famous student was John Coltrane. Later, he moved to Wisconsin, where he still resides. On the day of Cahill's concert, he will be, incredibly, a hundred and eight. Happy birthday, Mr. Ornstein. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

SURVIVORS

Guilty feelings in "Unbreakable" and "Bounce."

BY DAVID DENBY



Samuel L. Jackson, Spencer Treat Clark, and Bruce Willis, as a superman in denial.

LARA TOMLIN

When we first see Bruce Willis in "Unbreakable"—the latest film by the writer-director M. Night Shyamalan ("The Sixth Sense")—he is sitting on a train, alone and miserable, his head shaved, his eyes half closed, and his mouth firmly shut. Viewed in medium closeup, he looks like an enormous, melancholy egg. The smirk that was once Willis's irrepressible signature has vanished; the wicked gleam in his eye, which suggested he knew something dirty that the rest of us didn't, is gone, too. Willis also appeared in "The Sixth Sense," and once again he has been pressed into Shyamalan's sombre, catacomb-dark vision. Shyamalan "sees" the movie he's making in his head and then shoots the precise details and angled shots that he wants, omitting the "coverage" (full views of a scene) that most directors use to patch the moments that don't work. As much as Alfred Hitchcock, this thirty-year-old director imposes himself on every aspect of his material. If only Shyamalan had some of Hitchcock's instincts as an entertainer. "The Sixth Sense" was a sober-sided but very affecting ghost story; "Unbreakable" is about a man who would really prefer to be a ghost. Willis plays a football-stadium guard named David Dunn, who has superhuman powers that he chooses to suppress. A guilt-ridden survivor of accidents in which others get mangled, David shrouds his invincibility in the commonplace. As a result, he feels sad when he wakes in the morning, and this sadness cuts him off from his wife (Robin Wright Penn) and his little boy (Spencer Treat Clark). In a semi-daze, he wanders around Philadelphia followed by a furiously obsessed man named Elijah Price (Samuel L. Jackson), who wants to rouse him from his trance. Elijah succeeds—though far, far too late in the movie. "Unbreakable" is an impressively controlled piece of supernatural fantasy, but Willis's melancholia never really lifts. There's no liberation in "Unbreakable"—no liberation from pain or from Shyamalan's concept, which becomes almost oppressive in its slow-moving weight.

In a prelude, we view Elijah's birth in a mirror; years later, he falls down some subway steps, and as he lies on the

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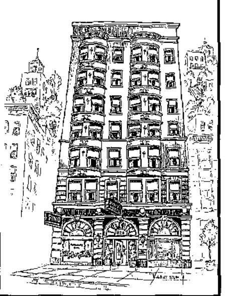
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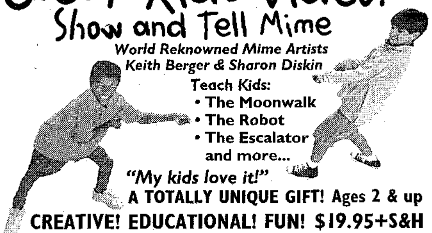
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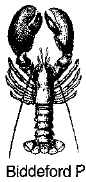
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ground he looks at the world upside down. With such visual cues as these, Shyamalan lets us know that Elijah is seeking an image with reversed polarities—he's seeking a man who has qualities the opposite of his own. Elijah suffers from osteogenesis imperfecta: his bones crumble easily, and he's always taking spills and getting broken into pieces. It would be nice to report that Jackson, stumping around, or settled uneasily in a wheelchair, has suffering charm, but charm is not what Jackson and Shyamalan were after. Jackson wears dark clothes and a portentous mass of Little Richard hair, and he speaks with haughty sarcasm and withering precision. He's like an overwrought minister looking for a hell to send someone to. Elijah runs a gallery devoted to comic-book art; he's obsessed with comic books, particularly of the fantastic and heroic variety ("Little Lulu" probably isn't to his taste), and he latches on to David Dunn after Dunn survives a calamitous train wreck. David is Elijah's superhero, an invulnerable being right out of comic-book mythology—the opposite of himself. He pursues him, hounds him, traps him into asserting his powers.

If Jackson did not have his stinging focus and clarity, the character would be remarkably absurd. And if Shyamalan were not so rigorous a filmmaker the movie would be merely lugubrious. As it is, "Unbreakable" comes close. For long stretches, the two men move slowly around a rain-soaked, gray-blue Philadelphia, a city utterly devoid of cheer. The other characters often speak in whispers. Yet, hushed and gloomy and remote as some of the movie is, it achieves a consistent high style, and without much in the way of artifice. David's son is just as convinced as Elijah that his father is a superman, and there's a fine scene in which Bruce Willis, lying on a bench as the boy watches, presses more and more weight. What makes the moment convincing, and even touching, is that Willis, turning red and puffing mightily, works like hell to lift the barbell. Shyamalan doesn't dress his fancies in special effects; he doesn't morph David into a creature who can scale buildings like a fly. For a while, "Unbreakable" could almost be a morbid, naturalistic story about a man afraid of his own capacities—a metaphor for anyone's fears of what he could do if he fully unleashed his will. Bruce Willis works very quietly, with impressive humility, his powerful shoulders rounded, his bulk covered, monklike, in a hooded poncho. He's a saint of self-abnegation, the hero of a dense and solid world in which magic is nevertheless possible.

In a crowded railroad station, David brushes into people randomly and in a flash sees the nasty things they have done. He follows one man, a housebreaker and a murderer, to a crime scene and tries to stop him. The ensuing violence, which comes as a relief after so much suppression, is faster and more abrupt than anything else in the movie—the camera is thrown into odd positions, as if it were getting smashed by the blows itself. Yet Shyamalan doesn't try to excite us; he doesn't turn the moment into a triumph; nor does he make his hero an icon. No one could accuse him of hypocritically loving the violence that he holds in abeyance for so long. In all, "Unbreakable" is a very strange fantasy—admirably disciplined and grimly beautiful but never as involving as "The Sixth Sense." In that movie, we knew what Haley Joel Osment's lucid and terrified little boy wanted, and we knew what Bruce Willis's doctor, estranged from his loving wife, wanted, too. The muted atmosphere was charged with emotion. But in "Unbreakable" the longing of the comic-book aesthete for a perfect hero never really makes much sense. How is David supposed to mend and redeem Elijah? How is he supposed to stop him from falling down and breaking his bones? And David's reason for abstaining from action never makes much sense, either. When David becomes a hero at last, he and Elijah have nothing of interest to say to one another, and the revelation at the end—unlike the one at the end of "The Sixth Sense"—is a

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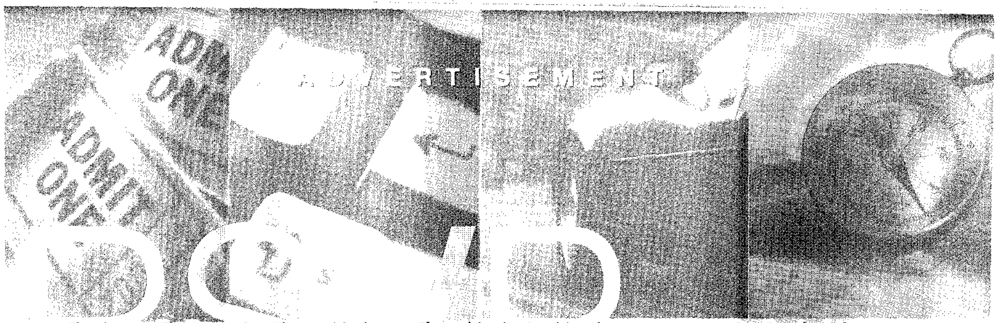
cheat. In "Unbreakable," Shyamalan has created a drama of polar opposites without working out the magnetic attraction that holds the opposites together. Whatever the relationship is supposed to mean, it's not on the screen, though the rest of the movie is morosely imposing.

"The Opposite of Sex," Don Roos's 1998 romantic comedy, was a tart and original work in which seeming irrelevancies—including a chattering tag-along character played by Lisa Kudrow—worked themselves into the center of a story that kept changing before our eyes. The picture was literally offbeat—maybe too voluble and freewheeling to suit the tastes of a large audience (it did only moderate business). If so, Roos has learned his lesson with alarming speed and thoroughness. At the beginning of "Bounce," Roos's new movie, Ben Affleck, swinging his body with confidence through an airport lounge in Chicago, sets his character, an advertising director, quickly and well—smart guy, good at selling, but a bit callous, and fairly contemptuous of most people around him. At the airport, Affleck picks up a woman for the night and gives his ticket to Los Angeles to a family man (Tony Goldwyn) trying to get home. The plane crashes, the family man dies, and Affleck falls apart. A year later, concealing his identity, he visits the widow (Gwyneth Paltrow), who is attracted to him but nervous and guilty about seeing anyone after her husband's death. As each lies to the other, some of Roos's earlier flare reappears—the conversations seem to go in two or more directions at once, each character saying one thing and meaning another and getting caught in the middle. Gwyneth Paltrow has a few moments of balled-up awkwardness that are quite funny, and I became convinced that the movie would have worked better without its dead husband and its burden of guilt and remorse. By temperament, Roos is suited to comedy. Committed here to a trite, soap-opera plot, he has nothing to fall back on but obvious old tricks (the character about to confess when something interrupts him) and cheap redemption: Ben Affleck, humiliated, has to learn the value of honesty and family. Somewhere in the middle, "Bounce" falls from movies into television, and doesn't bounce back. ♦



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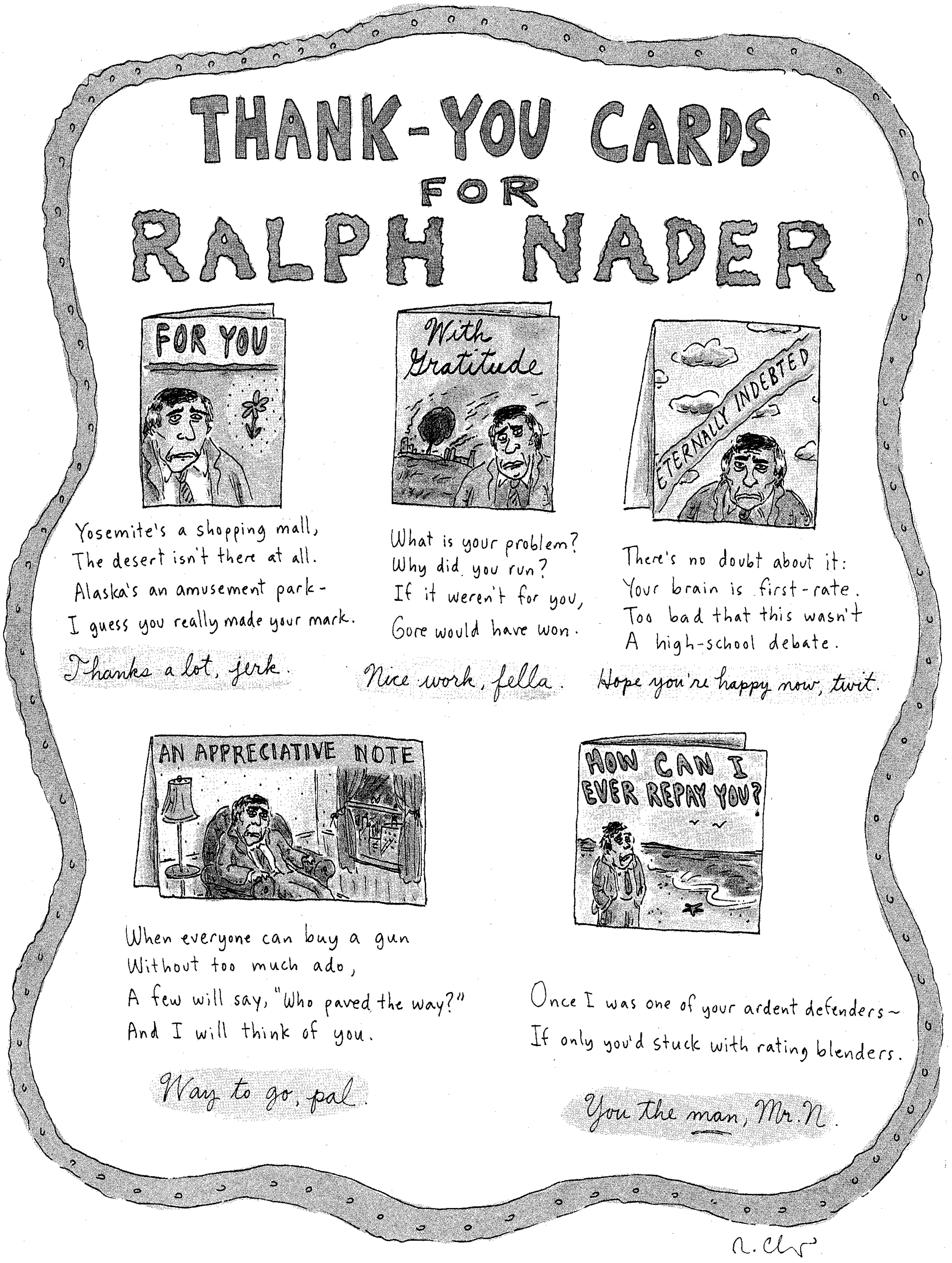
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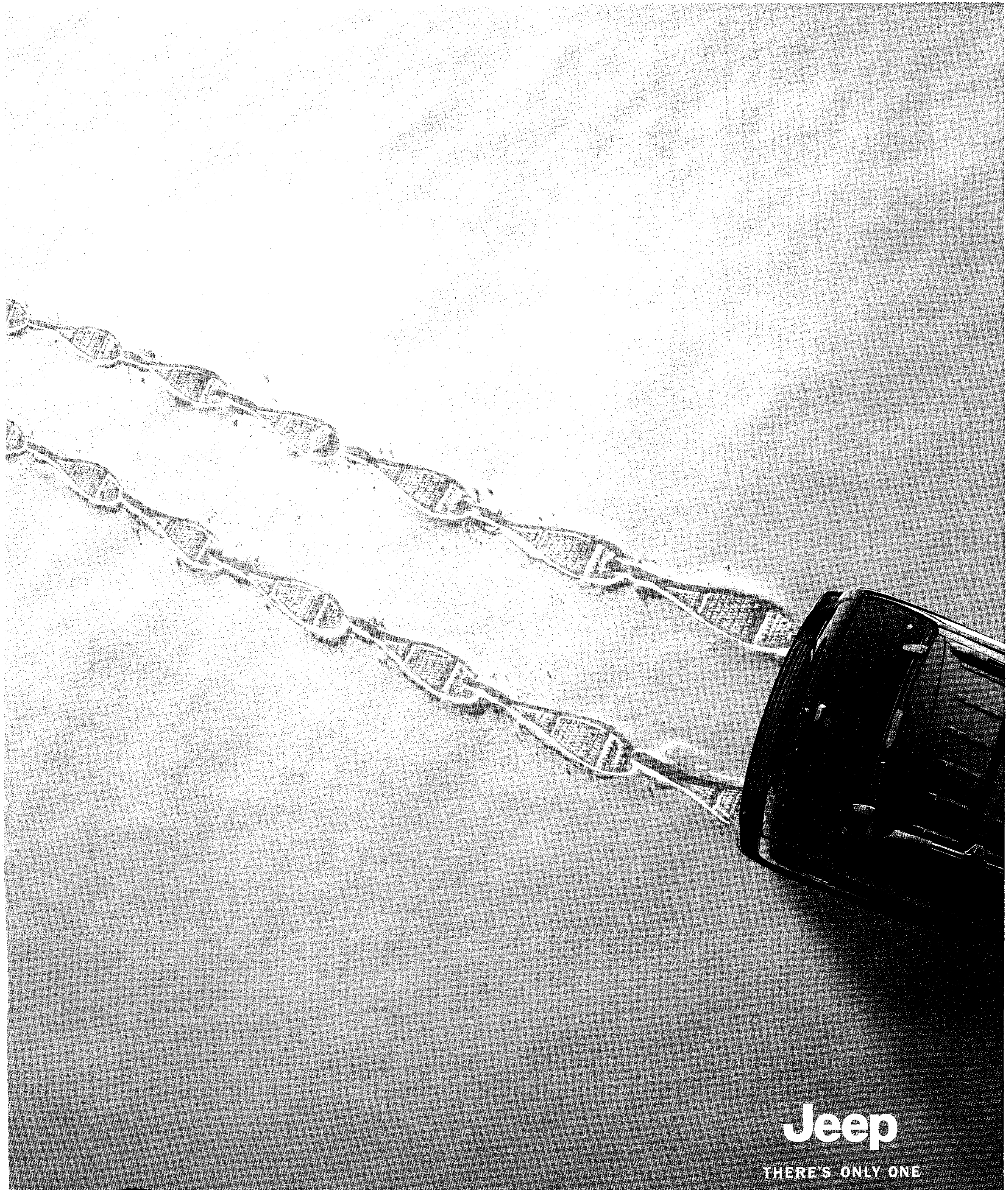
FOR YOU
Yosemite's a shopping mall,
The desert isn't there at all.
Alaska's an amusement park -
I guess you really made your mark.
Thanks a lot, jerk.
With Gratitude
What is your problem?
Why did you run?
If it weren't for you,
Gore would have won.
Nice work, fella.
ETERNALLY INDEBTED
There's no doubt about it:
Your brain is first-rate.
Too bad that this wasn't
A high-school debate.
Hope you're happy now, twit.
AN APPRECIATIVE NOTE
When everyone can buy a gun
Without too much ado,
A few will say, "Who paved the way?"
And I will think of you.
Way to go, pal.
HOW CAN I EVER REPAY YOU?
Once I was one of your ardent defenders~
If only you'd stuck with rating blenders.
You the man, Mr. N.
R. Chast



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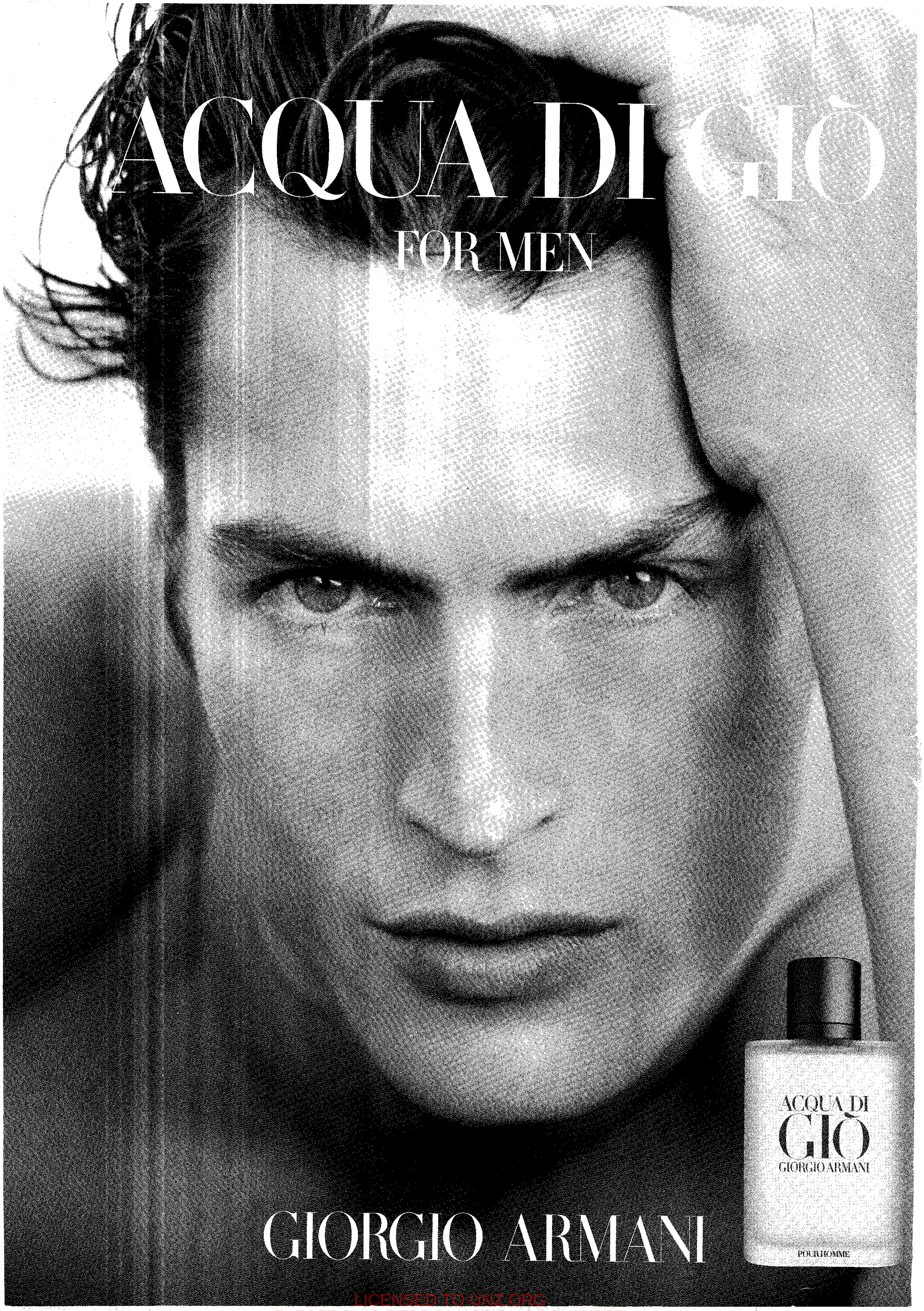
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